

Patrick Bade | Gian Lorenzo Bernini

- [Judi] Welcome to everybody who's already online. Just to let you know that if anybody who likes to ask any questions, we have the Q and A button. You can submit your questions and we will try and answer them, well, Patrick will try and answer them at the end of the talk. So once again, welcome everybody, and welcome Patrick. I'll hand over to you.

- Thank you, Judi, and good afternoon, good morning to everybody. We're looking at the over life size sculpture of Neptune and Triton by Bernini in the Victoria and Albert Museum. This is the only major work by Bernini in the British Isles. It was commissioned in the early 1620s by an Italian cardinal for his pleasure garden in Rome. And it's a piece I know very well because in my 30 years of Socrates education, every year, I used to, in the first term, I would do an introductory talk with my students about sculpture, tech sculptural techniques, ways of looking at sculpture, ways of talking about sculpture. And I always began with this piece in the Victoria and Albert Museum. And the first thing I did was to get everybody to walk around it, because obviously the sculpture is a 3D thing. Here we are looking at it from a frontal point of view, and I'd say to them, which are the important viewpoints, which are the best viewpoints of this piece?

*Slides are displayed throughout the presentation.*

And they would walk slowly around. And also I try and get them to analyse the composition of the piece from each viewpoint. And what becomes apparent as you walk around is how carefully thought out this is by Bernini. You've got this tremendously tumultuous piece full of movement and drama, but he always balances it out. There's always finally a sense of equilibrium with all this movement with one strong diagonal being countered by another. And another very striking feature of this piece, actually from any angle, is the drapery, which is really spectacular, the way it's carved. Course it's carved, actually, it's carved with a drill. So you get this very, very deep carving into the marble. And you see this piece of drapery flying out on the right hand side here. And I say to the students, "What is drapery? What function does it have in this piece?" Drapery is very important in Bernini and in Baroque sculpture and art all together.

And it can have all sorts of functions. It creates drama and excitement, and I'd always make the comparison, of course, with Marilyn Monroe standing on the pavement in New York and the wind lifting her skirts. There always seems to be plenty of wind around in the drapery, in Baroque sculptures. And so, yes, excitement, drama. It also has sometimes compositional function. And from looking at it from this angle, it's very important for creating another diagonal and for balancing the whole composition. And there's a theory about this particular piece. I wonder, looking at that piece of drapery flying out on the right-hand side, if it reminds you of anything. Do you see anything in it? Some people have seen it as suggesting the head of a dolphin. So let's move on round here. Again, you can see how, in fact, course the second image I showed you, he's not holding his fork. And I presume that the original one was lost over the ages, but it's very important to the whole composition to create the balance from this point of view with this pyramidal effect with the counter lines.

And here we are, even from the back, it's an amazing piece from the back. And here you can see, again the very spectacular carving of the drapery and from the other side. And notice how the twist of the body from one side to another is also very important. So there's always something interesting to look at from whatever angle you look at this piece. And I think Bernini is the supreme master of skilled stone cutting, marble cutting, so that he can make marble look like anything. As I said, it can look like flapping drapery, it can look like flesh, it can look like hair, even have a sense of the hairiness of Neptune's chest. And again, you've got this very deep cutting with the drill. With this detail, you can see that this piece has quite a lot of surface where after being in a garden in Rome, it was brought to Britain in the 18th century, and it was in an English garden for well over a hundred years.

And I think that shows in the surface of the head, which has suffered some damage. And here is Triton blowing his conch. Now, before I move on to talk about Bernini's life and career, I want to concentrate on another very major work. And this is the Cornaro Chapel, which was created between 1645 and '52. And I say created because it's a combination of architecture, sculpture, and painting. It's what Wagner later would've called a total work of art, with different art forms and different materials fused together, which is extraordinarily operatic. You feel you are in a little theatre. And as I've mentioned before, it's no coincidence that opera was born as an art form in the early 17th centuries. It's birth is coincidental with that of the Baroque style. And there's always something Baroque about opera, and there's always something very operatic about the Baroque style. So it shows the ecstasy of St. Teresa of Avila and the whole thing uses very theatrical, illusionistic effects.

When the English diarist, John Evelyn, went to Rome in 1644, just as Bernini was working on this, beginning to work on it, he proposed in his diary that Bernini wrote an opera. He wrote the words, he wrote the music, he designed and built the theatre, and he designed all the costumes and the sets. So that really was the ultimate. So this is an 18th century painting, which in a way conveys the intended effect very well, where you've got this illusionistic ceiling, not by Bernini himself, but by an assistant, a painter assistant called Giovanni Battista Gaulli. And it looks like there's been some kind of huge explosion, and the ceiling is blown away and you look right up to heaven. And you have all these rather sexy angels with naked legs flying around all over the place. And you can see legs coming out of the painting into real space. And you see the Cornaro family who commissioned the chapel sitting in what looked like opera boxes on either side and reacting in a very lively way to what they can see. So in the image on the left, you can see how the legs actually come out 3D from the fresco at the top. And you can see there's a window which lets in light, which shines very brightly on the fresco, makes it look very bright and luminous. But you can also see what seems to be supernatural light shining on those gilded metal rods, eventually look like heavenly rays coming down on onto St. Teresa.

Here we've got a different angle, and this is a very brilliant piece of theatrical illusionism. This is what it looks like from the outside. So you can see that there is a kind of cupboard attached to the side of the church, St. Teresa is inside that. And at the top of it is a window from which the

light comes that shines on those metal rods. But when you're inside the church, you can't see that window so it's a hidden light source. So if you go right up close, of course, and you look up, you can see the window and you'll see that the glass in it is yellow. So it's tinted to make it look like heavenly sunlight. So it's been a very controversial piece even in its day. There were people who found this sexualization, eroticization of religious ecstasy, rather disturbing. There was a French artist, appeal who went to see it in the 17th century. And he looked at it and he said in his very French way, "If this is religious ecstasy, I know it well," he said. And, oh, where have I got? It's a long quote, a sheet of paper here, which I can't find, oh where is it? Yeah. So in fact, it's a very literal transcription by Bernini of a piece of writing by St. Teresa. She described how during the night, "I saw," an angel came down to her, "I saw in his hand a long spear of gold with an iron point that seemed to be on fire. He appeared to me to be thrusting it at times into my heart and to pierce my very entrails. When he drew it out, he seemed to draw my entrails out with it, and also to leave me on fire with the great love of God.

The pain was so great that it made me moan. And so surpassing was its sweetness that even in this excessive pain, I could not wish to be rid of it." So I mean, I think obviously to us, that does sound pretty sexual and pretty erotic. And this rather knowing smile on the angel's face. And also, what you might think is a slightly gratuitous detail of the angel opening up her robes to bear her breast so that he can thrust the arrow into it. Once again, look at this incredible drapery. It's extraordinary to think that that is marble that's been hewn from hard marble, crystalline marble. The agitation of the drapery suggests her physical sensations and also contributes to the drama of the piece, here you see the expression on the angel's face. And this a plaster cast I bought recently, which is now in my Paris flat. Mike and Gail, who I think might be watching this, will recognise the jug that they gave me above St. Teresa having her little ecstasy in the corner of my dining room. So here is young Bernini; he could paint as well, it seems there was nothing he couldn't do. And he's born in 1598 and he was the son of a minor sculptor called Pietro Bernini. And I think that's very important.

These artists, like Mozart for instance, who's the son of a minor composer, I think this extraordinary virtuosity in brilliance and facility that certain artists have, it's because they were introduced to the techniques of their art at a very, very early age. So just as Mozart would've learnt music as other children learned to breathe or to speak, Bernini would've learnt the techniques of sculpture from the earliest infancy. And his father was attracted to Rome by possible Papal commissions. And this is a work by Pietro Bernini the father, which is a very competent piece of sculpture in a late Renaissance style. And it became very evident by the time that Bernini was in his early teens, that he was an extraordinary talent. And this is a piece, it's in The Metropolitan Museum in New York, which is thought to have been jointly made by Bernini and his father. This is one of the first fully independent pieces by Bernini. It shows the martyrdom of St. Lawrence who was grilled to death. So you see him on his grill, and you can see already he's attempting to an extraordinary idea to represent flames by carving them in marble. Now it shows the agony of the saint as he's being grilled to death.

And I think I've told this story already, very famous story, about how he put his foot into flames

and held a mirror up to see what it would do to his facial expression. And this is another piece around the same time of a damned soul burning in hell. And this also seems to have been a kind of self-portrait. Now, his breakthrough came when he was not yet 20 when his talent was picked up by the second most powerful prelate in Rome after the Pope. And this was Cardinal Scipione Borghese. And this is one of two portraits that Bernini carved for the cardinal. While he was carving the first version, to his horror, a split opened up in the marble. And I think it's really well worth emphasising this, how fragile marble is.

And using a mallet and a chisel and hacking it away at it, you can have a disaster at any moment. So he was of course, obviously appalled by this and realised it could get him into big trouble with the cardinal. So he managed to whip up another version very, very quickly indeed. And the cardinal came over to his studio to see the bust. And Bernini initially said, "Oh, I'm terribly sorry, Monsignor, a terrible thing has happened. This split has happened in my sculpture." And the cardinal was obviously very disappointed. And then he had the other version under a piece of cloth, and he whipped off that and he said, "Here's another one I've whipped up in the meantime." And of course, the cardinal was very pleased and satisfied by that. It's an extraordinary thing really. It's so alive, you know, this cold white marble.

And it seems to be speaking to you, and I think I've quoted Bernini before saying that, "If you want to get a really good likeness of somebody, you have to engage them in conversation. And you have to make them look as though they have just spoken or about to speak." You can see the lips slightly parted, really is extraordinary. Again, the texture, you know, the crow's feet around the eyes, the eyebrows, and the moustache and the beard. And this, you can look at this jowly chin and you can see that the cardinal was certainly somebody who did not lead a very aesthetic life. It was said that three things he chased after in life were beauty, money, and male beauty. He was obviously into beautiful young men. Here we are, right close up to his face. Look at the way the pupils of the eyes have been drilled. Obviously we're not really looking, it shouldn't really be lit like this. You see it in reality with normal lighting, those little holes in the eyes will just register as dark pupils. So Cardinal Borghese between 1618 and 1623, so it's a period of five years, he commissions a series of magnificent sculptures from this young man. This is the first of them. And there's a sort of show off thing.

I mean, he's really making life as difficult for himself as possible. Think how carefully calculated this would have to be, that the marble has to be strong enough to bear the weight of all of this, how easy it would be, carving three figures like this for the whole thing to crack and break. The subject of this one is Aeneas fleeing from the burning Troy, carrying his father, Anchises, and followed by his little son, Ascanius. Here it is from a different angle. I mean, he's in his late teens when he carves this, and it's of course amazing, but I think actually, you can see that it's an early work, that he hasn't quite gone beyond the late Renaissance manner of style. Whereas the next one, which is "The Rape of Proserpina by Pluto," you can see him fully in his stride. One of the characteristics of a Baroque sculpture, Bernini in particular, is this sort of tremendous sense of movement. Whether classical or Renaissance sculpture, they will seem to rest tranquilly on the pedestal, but a Baroque sculpture seem to be about to come off it.

There's a strong sense of moving beyond the pedestal. Notice here, the use of the drapery. You get a little bit of Pluto's pubic hair popping up over the top of it, very exquisitely calved and drilled, and look at that amazing beard. So the drapery has double function here. One is for modesty; it's covering up the naughty bits, and the other function is of course to support the whole piece. Without that drapery, it just wouldn't be possible. The ankles of Pluto would not be strong enough to support the weight of the sculpture. You might think it's a bit dubious for a cardinal to be commissioning these sculptures of rape scenes, rape scenes, very, very popular in the Renaissance and as we've seen also in the Baroque period, particularly the Baroque period. On the right hand side is "The Rape of the Sabines," by Giambologna.

That's a mid 16th century sculpture, very famous in Florence. And Bernini would've known it well if only through small bronze reproductions. And so it is interesting to compare the two. There is something of course very artificial, very balletic about the Giambologna. There's a degree of realism, inverted commas, in the Bernini, which goes way beyond the Giambologna. Here we see it from the back. And again, look at the drapery flying off behind her, her hair flying in the breeze, the delicacy of her hand. Think of all that carved in marble, and at the bottom, you can see the triple-headed dog, Cerberus, who always accompanies Pluto. And here again, you can see how Bernini, he's an equivalent of Rubens. You know, I said, Rubens is the great master of flesh in painting and Bernini is the great master of flesh in marble. Notice how the figures actually sink into the flesh as Pluto grabs hold of Persephone Proserpina. And this is her face, and I think you can see how he's even attempted to carve tears. What an idea. Carving tears in marble. And then comes the David. And this is a good example of a Baroque sculpture being uncomfortable, well, not wishing to stay on its splint, he's about to leap off his splint. Tremendous sense of movement with this strong contrapposto pose.

And unlike Donatello, who shows David after he's killed Goliath, and Michelangelo who shows David before he kills Goliath, typically a Baroque artist will choose the high point of the drama. So this is the actual moment that David is contorted into this huge effort to kill the giant Goliath. Face again, repeatedly a self-portrait. And it was said at the time that Cardinal Borghese held the mirror for Bernini so that he could pull faces into the mirror and study the effect. The last piece that Bernini creates for Cardinal Borghese is another rape scene, or attempted rape. This is Apollo and Daphne. He's trying to rape her. She prays to the gods and they save her by transforming her into a laurel tree. And again, you think what a challenge for a sculptor to actually depict in marble the transformation of this woman into a laurel tree with her fingers sprouting twigs and leaves. And the carving is so precise and the leaves are so slender, just amazing, amazing, amazing that he could do this. And if you go and see it in the Borghese Gallery on a sunny day, the marble of the leaves is so thin that it's transparent; you can see the light through them. You then look at this frozen drama and the very, very brilliant carving of the hair and the drapery.

Now this period with Cardinal Borghese comes to an end in 1623 when Pope Urban VIII, the Barberini Pope, comes to the Papacy, and he wants the exclusive services of Bernini. I think it's

a bit shocking for us, although maybe we shouldn't be so shocked with what's going on in America at the moment, the incredible egotism and selfishness of these kings and Popes in the 17th century. I mean, Louis XIV, you know, putting all over state as me. And on the left hand side here, you can see a detail from a painting, ceiling painting, commissioned by Pietro da Cortona in the Palazzo Barberini. It's a vast ceiling and it depicts divine wisdom. And in the middle, the divine wisdom is represented by these vast sort of sci-fi bees. The bees were a symbol of the Barberini family. So almost the first thing that Pope Urban VIII did when he came to the Papal throne was to summon Bernini. And he addressed him as cavalier. And he said, "You are very lucky that I have come to the throne."

He said, "I'm even more lucky than you are to have you to serve me during my papacy." He wanted to use Bernini to embellish, first of all, the Basilica of St. Peter's, and secondly the city of Rome. So Bernini probably had more, well until Mussolini, Bernini had more impact on the appearance of Rome than anybody else. And the first thing he was commissioned to do was to create this great bronze baldacchino, which covers, underneath it, underneath the floor, is the tomb of St. Peter. This is vast. The columns are 66 feet high, that's 20 metres high of bronze. Cause they had to strip bronze off everything they could lay their hands on. And it's believed, widely believed, that they even stripped the bronze off the roof of the pantheon to go into these vast columns. That's Solomonic columns, these twisted columns. When Solomon's temple in Jerusalem was pillaged, they found these twisted columns in it, the Romans, and they, under the reign of Titus, and they were brought back in triumph to Rome.

So they refer to, in fact, the temple of Solomon. Here's another view. And look again, covered in little cherubs. And again, you can see bees for Barberini, Other things Urban VIII commissioned from Bernini, on the left hand side, a huge, vastly oversized statue of Longinus holding the spear that appears to Christ's side. That's in the crossing, and opposite is, that's not Bernini, it's by a Flemish sculptor called Duquesnoy, shows St. Andrew and of course his tomb. So there's quite a competition in the 17th century among these Baroque Popes, who can have the most lavish, the most amazing tomb. And this is the tomb of Urban VIII. And I'd like to talk a little bit now about Bernini as a portraitist. After Urban VIII came to the throne, he didn't have so much time for making portraits. But Urban VIII commissioned from Bernini, a portrait of King Charles I of England. It was believed by many people that Charles I was a closet Catholic or could possibly be drawn back to the Catholic church.

His wife, Henrietta Maria, was Catholic. And he was certainly very high church. And so Charles I, of course, could not travel to Rome to sit for Bernini. So van Dyck was commissioned to paint this very beautiful picture that I talked about some time ago of Charles I seen from three different angles. And Bernini's bust was carved from van Dyck's images. Sadly, Bernini's original doesn't survive. It was destroyed in the Whitehall fire of 1697. So we only know it from copies like this one. You can see here on the left. Now, just at the time that Bernini was working on the bust of Charles I, there was a very wealthy Englishman in Rome called Thomas Baker. And he commissioned a bust from Bernini, and Bernini started work on it, and when the Pope heard about this, he was displeased because he felt that it might diminish the specialness of his gift if

there was another English person who had a bust from Bernini.

So he ordered Ben to stop work on it. And in fact it was completed by Bernini's workshop. And that's a little warning really, because you think, "My God, if his assistants could do this," I mean, it's in the Victoria and Albert Museum. So those of you in London can, well, when the lockdown finishes, you'll be able to go and see it. It's a fantastic piece. Again, very skillful use of the drill to create the lace and this wonderful over-the-top Baroque hairstyle. He's got a sort of very thorpish look to him. And he always makes me think of Frans Hals' "Laughing Cavalier." And we've had this discussion about whether Frans Hals was mocking his wealthy setters or not, probably not, but I think there's something the same, almost caricatural element in the Bernini portrait of Thomas Baker. This is unique in Bernini's work because mostly, of course his commission portraits, were of men, and sculptural portraits of women are rare and almost unknown, unless of course, they're great noble women or princesses or queens or whatever. This is an ordinary woman. So it's really very exceptional indeed.

But she was his lover, and her name was Constanza Bonarelli. And, I think, you know, you look at this and you think, yes, I think he really loved her. And again, it's got this sort of wonderful intimacy and casualness that she seems to be talking to you. But this is a horrible story. I hope by telling you this, I'm not going to completely put you off Bernini. He discovered, I mean she was a married woman, so she shouldn't have been having an affair with Bernini, according to the customs of the time. And then he discovered she was also having an affair with his brother Luigi. And he beat her up publicly in the street and he ordered his servant to slash her face with razors. And of course this caused quite a scandal in Rome and the police were involved and there was a trial, but Bernini was given a Papal pardon, a sort of presidential pardon, like certain pardons that we've going on at the minute. She, on the other hand, was not pardoned and she was sent to prison as an adulteress. The brother must have been a rather dodgy character 'cause some years later he got into trouble with the law after having raped and buggered a boy assistant inside the Basilica of St. Peter's. So these were pretty rough times in Rome. Fountains.

Rome is very famous for its fountains and fountains were prestige things for Popes. They were of course charitable things because for poor people, it was very necessary to have a source of clean water, but they're also very much for the glorification of the Popes who commissioned them. And this one, this is the fountain of the bees. And you can see these monster bees carved into the marble. This is another fountain commissioned by Urban VIII on the Piazza Barberini in front of the Palazzo Barberini. And it's the Triton Fountain. But again, the dolphins in the foreground, you can see, have huge bees carved on them. Now, when Urban VIII died in 1644, cause it was amazing in the 17th century for a Papacy to last as long as 21 years, mostly Popes were elected when they were pretty old and they didn't last very long. But he was followed by the Pamphilj Pope, Innocent X, and the papacy, it was actually suddenly thinking all sorts of interesting parallels with the Americans' political situation, 'cause it was very competitive. There were different factions and families who really hated each other. And Innocent X was the bitter, bitter enemy of the Barberini family.

And it was unfortunate for Bernini who'd been so closely associated now for 20 years with Pope Urban VIII. So he rather falls out of fashion or out of favour during the reign of Innocent X. And this was compounded by a very unfortunate incident when Bernini had been commissioned by Urban VIII to design twin bell towers for the facade of St. Peter's in Rome. So they started constructing these, and it turned out that the former architect of St. Peter's, Maderno, had not made sufficiently strong foundations. And cracks opened up in these towers and they had to be dismantled. And this did Bernini a great deal of harm. He was a man who'd made many enemies and of course they triumphed and they really gloated over this. And as I said, for a while, he was completely persona non grata with the Pope. That changed with this fountain in the Piazza Navona. On the Piazza Navona was the Palazzo Doria Pamphilj, which is the palace of the Pope's family. So he wanted to put in an amazing fountain, the Four Rivers Fountain, that would completely outshine, outdo, all the earlier Papal fountains. And this is, I suppose, the most spectacular of all the Roman fountains.

And he announced a competition and all the leading sculptors in Rome were invited to submit modelli, these are 3D designs for the fountain, except Bernini. So Bernini was specifically excluded. But another very important prelate persuaded Bernini to make a modello anyway and accidentally on purpose, the Pope was shown as modello. And of course when he saw it, he was just so blown away by it. It was so amazing that very much against his will, his initial will anyway, he gave the commission to Bernini. It's a pretty amazing piece. And there are sort of many legends about it, many different interpretations of the rather complex symbolism of the four rivers. It's really the four continents. They didn't know about Australia then, of course. So there's Africa represented by the Nile, Asia by the Ganges, Europe by the Danube, and the Americas by the Rio de la Plata. You've got these very, very animated figures and it's the figure of the Nile on the left hand side whose head is covered. And that apparently represents the fact that, at this point in the 17th century, nobody knew where the Nile came from.

They didn't know about the source of the Nile, they didn't discover that, of course, till the 19th century. And on the right hand side, which river is that? I think it must be the Danube. The tourist guides, if you go to Rome, they take you to the Piazza Navona, will tell you, I remember hearing is, that the figure who's raising his hand is looking in horror and disgust at the church of Sant'Agnese. It's just out of view on the right hand side, which was by Borromini, who's the chief of artistic rival of Bernini in this period. But this is absolutely untrue because in fact, Borromini's Church was not built, was not even started until after Bernini's fountain was finished. Another view of the Four Rivers Fountain. This is another piece of course, he had more time on his hands for non-Papal commissions under Innocent X. And this is one I must say I particularly like, it's a monument to a nun who was famous for being able to perform amazing miracles. So it's just attached to a column of a church.

And you think this is made out of black marble and gilded bronze and orange marble. So a point I didn't make about "The Ecstasy of St. Teresa" is of course this love, this Baroque love of different textures, different colours, different materials, fusing them together. And again, it's



amazing piece of illusionism within a piece of sculpture. We've got this little putzi who are holding up a relief of the blessed Maria Raggi, the nun. So Innocent X lasts about a decade. And he is followed by Alexander VII, who immediately again uses Bernini in all sorts of ways. And of course wants to have a tomb that's bigger and better than that of Urban VIII. And it certainly is; this is an extraordinary piece. This is a photograph I took many years ago in Rome. And I like it because, just look at those little children standing in front of it. Look at the size of the marble baby being held by the figure of charity on the left.

The whole thing very dramatic and very operatic with this skeleton representing death coming out from under this complex mass of coloured marble drapery. And so Bernini is brought back to St. Peter's and he completes the ensemble at the east end of the church with the Cathedra Petri, which is the throne of St. Peter. It's one of the most precious relics in the Catholic world. Of course, like most of these great relics like the Turin Shroud and so on, in the 20th century, there has been scientific analysis in laboratories, and it's sad to say that the true throne of the St. Peter actually is an early mediaeval fake. But nevermind, it's just a wooden chair that's completely wrapped in this great bronze contraption. And also one of the most powerful features of Rome, the great piazza in front of St. Peter's, this is now commissioned by Pope Alexander VII from Bernini, Bernini saying he wanted this great colonnade to look like it's the arms of the Catholic church stretching out to embrace the faithful.

And this gives you a better idea of the immense, immense scale of this colonnade. This is the most important architectural project of Bernini. But I'm not going to talk about this today because I'm going to include this in my next talk, which will be on 17th century architecture. It's the Church of Sant'Andrea al Quirinale I'll just show you quickly some pictures of it, but I will talk in more detail about that on Wednesday. And also about this, cause in 1665, and Bernini is, as we know, well, for the 17th century, he's an old man, he's 67, and he was ordered by the Pope to go to Paris to work for Louis XIV. But as we shall hear on Wednesday, this was not a happy episode for Bernini and his designs for Louis XIV, unfortunately did not find favour and were not carried out. So he goes back to Rome, he's still very active to the last piece of modelli that he made for the statues that were actually carved by his assistant on the bridge across the Tiber leading to the Castel Sant'Angelo. And there is one final absolutely extraordinary masterpiece, this monument to the Blessed Ludovica Albertoni.

She was a very pious, noble woman who did good deeds and she was beatified. She wasn't made, she wasn't canonised, she didn't make it to to be a saint, but she was beatified, which is the first step towards it. And again, it's a kind of with sculpture, architecture, and painting. So this is the last really major work by Bernini. In a way, it's his most typical or extreme work. He apparently undertook it without payments so he really wanted to do it. And this is a little modello that's in the Victoria and Albert Museum for, I love this piece actually. Again, if I could choose one piece to own my own by Bernini, I wouldn't mind having this in my Paris flat. "The ecstasy of Ludovica Albertoni," she's lying on a mattress. She's writhing with the ecstasy of her communion with God. And of course you can see it's damaged, but it always looks to me like her orgasm has been so intense, her ecstasy is so intense that her face has just blown away, she's literally

blown away. And look at the drapery, and where is that drapery most agitated, what's it saying about this incredible intensity or sensation and feeling that's running through her body? Notice again also, the contrast between the white marble of the figure and the mattress and this great swath of coloured drapery made out of richly coloured marble.

And this is my final image for you tonight, and I'm going to come out of my share and see if there are questions and if I can answer them for you. See with 25 questions.

Q&A and Comments:

Q: Is Michelangelo considered a better sculpt than Bernini?

A: What do you mean by better? I'd probably, not better. I mean, on a technical, if you're talking about technique, Bernini completely, completely outstrips Michelangelo from a technique. But does technique make greatness? I think probably most art historians or experts inverted commas, 'cause you are perfectly entitled to your own opinion, would think that Michelangelo was a greater, more profound artist. Bernini has always had his detractors or people who thought he was trashy, operatic. Of course, there was a big reaction against him in the Neoclassical period. And he was very disapproved of in the early modern period when sculptors, you know, early Henry Moore and so on, they believed in truth to materials. And the whole point of Bernini is that he makes marble look like something else so that's not being true to your material.

Q: How did Neptune end up in UK and whose garden?

A: You can look up all that on the V and A website, but it's actually an interesting story. It remained with the family of the cardinal till the 18th century, then it was bought by an English dealer, brought to England, and fascinatingly it was bought by Sir Joshua Reynolds. I don't think he actually wrote anything about it, it'd be quite interesting to know why he bought it and what he liked about it. And then after he bought it, it was sold to this person who had it in his garden. And I actually can't remember the details of that, you'd have to look that up. How long this, I'm always asked this question, it's like, how long is a piece of string? I can't tell you, except that Bernini was, he was such a virtuoso and the fact that he could whip up a second bust of Cardinal Borghese in a matter of weeks, and apparently the last thing I showed you, they think that that was created in six months, it's pretty amazing. Pretty amazing.

Can you repeat where was the church? Which church? 'Cause I've shown so many churches today. And then, which instruments you were used? All sorts of chisels, claw chisels, and drills. And how, again, how long? I can't tell you. It's how long is a piece of string really. Belle Composter, could? Yes, no, I think, well is the term that is very often used, but it's up to you which one you want to use. is often used for also, of course, for those German Baroque churches that I'll be talking about in a month or so. Which of the three David sculptures is better executed? Well, certainly, as I said, from a technical point of view, there's no doubt that Bernini

is in a class of his own, whether you think it's the most beautiful or the greatest. I would say the one that is the most faithful to the biblical figure is the Verrocchio one. I like the Donatello one, but it's pretty kinky. And I have to tell you, this is a confession, I actually don't like the Michelangelo one, but that's my problem, not Michelangelo's. Exactly how much Bernini was paid? I can't tell you. All I can tell you he was very well paid and he was much appreciated.

Q: Are statues ever stood?

A: Yes, they are. In different ways; I mean, lots of statues, lots of Roman statues and Greek statues that were found in the Renaissance with bits missing, they had the bits replaced. And there is also, of course, the question of surface, which can get damaged or abraded and can be restored, inverted commas.

Would you send us to Irving? I'm not sure I can tell you that, I don't really know. I don't really know. Do you have any idea of how prices were negotiated on commissions? I know odd anecdotes, but I don't know really how they were in general. The best marble, the most famous marble comes from Carrara, but of course there are other sources of marble, especially for coloured marbles.

Q: What was the official position of Catholic vis-a-vis graven images?

A: Well, they're not, obviously in Catholic church, . Now, there were times actually in the Middle Ages, I think St. Bernard of Clairvaux, there were people who fulminated against graven images. And then there were all the debates about images and imagery in the Council of Trent in the Counter-Reformation, in the 16th century. But I think by this time, by the 17th century and into the 18th century, the imagery had really won over. I've seen some of Bernini's fountains.

Yes, they are fountains. They are particular fountains, the Respighi Fountains of Rome. I don't think they're all Bernini, but certainly some of them are. How long, this how long business, I can't answer you, I'm sorry. It's, as I said, it's like a piece of string. How did he bond the different marbles? Well, they're not really bonded. They would just have to be carved to fit together. Where did he get his marble from? Well, probably the white marble would've come from Carrara and the coloured marbles from all over, from different sources.

Q: How did Papal edicts influence his style and how did his style differ?

A: I don't think that, but luckily, you know, all the strictures of the Counter-Reformation, and the Council of Trent were well behind Bernini. They'd moved on from that. I suppose so much of his important work was for the papacy. And I think they pretty well gave him a free hand.

Let's see if I can go on to more, he had large workshops of very, very skilled, what the French would've called people, who carved a lot of stuff for him. He had time to carve them because a lot of people, I mean, I presume the very early things, the things he did for Cardinal Borghese,

were largely his work although it said that there were assistants who helped him with all the carving of the leaves in the Apollo and Daphne. Well, it seems to me, I don't think you need to go to Botticelli for a shell. Neptune, he's the god of the sea. It's kind of an obvious image for the god of sea to be in a shell. No, he didn't work for the Doges in Venice.

Now, where is the Ludovica? Oh, Ludovica is a church. What is it? Is it San Francesco? It's in a church in Rome. I can't remember the exact name of it. I can't possibly identify location of every work of art I discussed. Otherwise, I would have to actually do completely different kinds of lectures, and it would really slow things down. I mean, in some lectures, I think it's useful, I can send you lists. When did he die? He died in the 1670s and he's buried in Rome. I'm trying to move on downwards. The Apollo and Daphne is in the Villa Borghese. Yeah. It is really a thing of wonder, isn't it? Transporting these enormous heavy things, you know, before railways, before adequate roads. And you think things like, well of course this is a mystery again, but how did they transport the Stonehenge? And people are still puzzling that one out. So it is amazing that these things, these huge things, were transported.

How were the sculpture in the pia, of some pieces sculpted? How were the sculpture? I'm not sure what you are asking there. Bernini's last sculpture, you showed display of religious ecstasy, but really quite erotic. You can say that again. Yeah, sometimes. I mean, I think there were raised eyebrows, I'm not sure about that one, but certainly about the St. Teresa. And of course, earlier in the 16th century, there had been big debates about Michel and the nudity in the Sistine Chapel and fig leaves were added in the course of 16th century to Adam and other figures in the Sistine Chapel.

What do you think of the Bernini? I don't know it actually, I haven't followed that. These days, I must say, I'm so happy to have escaped the world of the auction houses. I don't really follow it all that much. Sorry, Irving Lavin was the greatest American art historian who wrote extensively on Bernini. He died in 2019. Anti-Semitic writings on Bernini's works in, I'm not quite sure what you're asking me there. No, I don't think artists usually had agents. I think they had to probably do the negotiating. Not in the modern sense anyway. Did he have children? Yes, he did, but don't ask me the details. Does the marble deteriorate? It can do.

Well, obviously, if it's outer doors or exposed to pollution, it can do, yes. Let me see. Do you think modern? Nobody has the skill of Bernini in carving stone. I mean, I'm not in any way denigrating Henry Woffler, he's not interested in that, he doesn't want to do that. He's doing something totally different. Yes, thank you. San Francesco a Ripa in Trastevere in Rome is where the Ludovica is. Right. Died on 28th of November, 1680. Thank you. Bernini, are there unfinished works of Bernini? Well, there are modelli that show you how he worked. I mean, Bernini was somebody who would've, he was unlike Michelangelo of course, who had a block of stone and directly carved it. Bernini wasn't directly carving. He would model his figures first. And there are quite a number of these modelli that exist. Let me see. Right. I think that's probably, oh, I think that's it. I thank you. Thank you very much.

- [Judi] Thank you very much Patrick. Thank you everybody who joined us this evening. And Patrick, we'll see you again on Wednesday.

- Yeah. Yes, thank you Judi.

- [Judi] Everybody who is listening, we have another talk in an hour, part two of Amadeus with Dennis and David. So we'll see you all later. Thank you so much, bye-bye.

- Thanks. Bye-bye.