

Dramatic Aspirations at Villa Borghese:
The Theatrics of Bernini's Sculptural Group

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Introduction:

This paper focuses on both the display and subject matter of Gian Lorenzo Bernini's sculptures at Villa Borghese in Rome, Italy. Utilizing research with primary source material, including biographical accounts of Bernini's life, evidence of the artist's interest and involvement in the theater of the seventeenth century is illuminated. The sculptural group at the villa exemplifies Bernini's early affinity for theatricality within the context of the larger Borghese collection. This is explored through examination of the sculptures' compositional arrangement, placement within the gallery, and visual presentation of emotion. Each aspect encourages viewer interaction with the sculptures, much like that which is achieved during musical and theatrical performances from the same time period. Delving into art theory and criticism from the time period, Bernini's approach to the sculptures featured at Villa Borghese is a testament to the artist's ability to evoke viewer response to his work. This paper will look in detail at one of the four main sculptural groups of the villa. This sculpture, *Apollo and Daphne*, will be analyzed visually and in reference to pertinent literature in order to explore its similarity of presentation to visual performances of the theater in the seventeenth century.

Section One: Theatrical Elements in the Setting of Villa Borghese

Located in the Roman Pinciano Quarter among a sprawling suburban landscape, Villa Borghese stands as a testament to the wealth and ambition of the Borghese family. After his uncle became Pope Paul V, Scipione Borghese used his relational power to purchase property and build Villa Borghese between 1612-1613.¹ Together Paul V and his nephew used the villa as a way to encourage urbanization, as this was one goal of the pope's pontificate.² In addition to the desire for urbanization, the villa was primarily built to house Borghese's vast collection of art, including both antique and commissioned works. The commissioned works included those produced by Gian Lorenzo Bernini in the early seventeenth century. Especially in the display of his collection, both the interior and exterior of the villa reveal Borghese's appreciation for theater and entertainment. In this way, the villa provides a stage from which Bernini's sculptures create a rich performance for the visitors of the villa.

The Borghese family's wealth extended beyond Villa Borghese with their ownership of "residences in Borgo, Ripetta, Montecavallo, and outside Porta Pinciana."³ The expanse of property owned by the Borghese family prior to the construction of the villa shows the family's well-established prominence before Pope Paul V's inauguration into the papacy. Their collective familial wealth was only increased after Paul V's reign. As Villa Borghese was never intended to be a place of permanent residence for the family, building the site further indicates the wealth and ambition of the Borghese family. The limited residential area also suggests again that the central purpose of the villa was to

¹ Paolo Moreno and Chiara Stefani, *The Borghese Gallery* (Milan: Touring Club Italiano, 2000), 6.

² Moreno and Stefani, *The Borghese Gallery*, 24.

³ Alberta Campitelli, *Villa Borghese* (Italy: Skira Editore, 2003), 19.

be a structure built for the display of art. Coupled with the existence of other residences, the creation of Villa Borghese is evidence of the importance of art and collecting to Scipione Borghese.

The architecture of the villa and the surrounding grounds is contrasted with classical antique artifacts that are fixed into the landscape of the park. This is a reflection of the blend of Scipione's antique and commissioned works in the villa's interior collection of art. Found within the park grounds of Villa Borghese, "'Classical' temples and innumerable 'ruins' are dotted here and there."⁴ Much like the designed landscape of the Villa Borghese, the villa itself is a seventeenth-century addition to the larger, more ancient setting of Rome. This is especially true when considering that Scipione's plan of design is reminiscent of Hadrian's villa located at Tivoli.⁵ The Villa Borghese was not the only villa built around the same time that incorporated antiquities in the overall design, as the Villa Medici "with its group of the *Niobids*,"⁶ an outdoor sculptural installment depicting the children of Amphion and Niobe from Greek myth, is similar in layout concept. The similarities between the two villas, in the use of antiquity, demonstrate the transitional period into the style that characterized Baroque expression.

Borghese began purchasing the land on which Villa Borghese was built in 1606.⁷ The previous owner of the property used the site for cultivating vineyards, so the transition to the villa gardens was relatively swift. After Borghese's initial purchase, the construction of the villa and the design process for the gardens occurred simultaneously in the early seventeenth century. The first architect responsible for carrying out

⁴ Georgina Masson, *Italian Villas and Palaces* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1961), 248-249.

⁵ Georgina Masson, *Italian Gardens* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1966), 194.

⁶ Moreno and Stefani, *The Borghese Gallery*, 24.

⁷ Campitelli, *Villa Borghese*, 20.

Borghese's vision for the property was Flaminio Ponzio.⁸ Around the same time Villa Borghese was constructed, Ponzio helped build the Acqua Paola fountain for the Trastevere sector of Rome. The fountain was a "monument to Paul V's concern for the welfare of the Romans and for the beautification of their town."⁹ Much like Villa Borghese, Acqua Paola represents the efforts made by Pope Paul V to enhance aspects of Rome's infrastructure.

At Villa Borghese, Flaminio Ponzio worked on "the Casino Nobile [term for the villa] and the harmonization and unification of the various plots of land...the creation of avenues, the enclosing of the property and the leveling of the land."¹⁰ A casino was a building not "intended as a residence but simply as a place for short visits particularly during the hot season."¹¹ This aligns with the purpose of Villa Borghese in housing Scipione Borghese's collection of art. In this sense, the villa's primary function was a place meant for entertainment for visitors and patron alike. After the death of Ponzio in 1613, Giovanni Vasanzio succeeded him as head architect. Vasanzio's task was to enlarge the design of the villa's surrounding landscape to accommodate the park portion of the property. By the death of Pope Paul V in 1621, the expansion of the site of the villa and the park was complete.¹²

In designing Villa Borghese simultaneously with the surrounding landscape, the architects made a conscious decision to contrast the more modern Baroque style with representations of ancient Rome. The inclusion of both antique and modern elements

⁸ Campitelli, *Villa Borghese*, 20.

⁹ Torgil Magnuson, *Rome in the Age of Bernini: From the Election of Sixtus V to the Death of Urban VIII* (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1982), 1:122.

¹⁰ Campitelli, *Villa Borghese*, 20.

¹¹ Magnuson, *Rome in the Age of Bernini*, 13.

¹² Campitelli, *Villa Borghese*, 20.

indicates a transition from previous Roman artistic expression into the Baroque period of art. In a diary entry written by John Evelyn, an English traveler in the 1640s, he describes the exterior of Villa Borghese as a combination of both antique and Baroque architecture. Evelyn wrote, “The outer walls of the house are encrusted with excellent antique bass-relievos, of the same marble, incornished with festoons and niches set with statues from the foundation to the roof. A stately portico joins the palace, full of statues and columns of marble, urns, and other curiosities of sculpture.”¹³ Again, the exterior of the structure reflects the collection housed within its interior.

As discussed previously, Villa Borghese was mainly used as a place of entertainment, especially with the presence of Borghese’s interior collection. This form of entertainment through art also functioned educationally for visitors of the villa. Borghese permitted the villa collection to be accessible to the public, which “provided artists with an opportunity to study the great masters and the works of antiquity.”¹⁴ Similarly, Bernini visited the Vatican collections for inspiration in creating his sculptures. According to Domenico Bernini, Bernini’s son, the artist spent his youth visiting “the Vatican Palace...there he remained until sunset, drawing, one by one, those marvelous statues that antiquity has conveyed to us and that time has preserved for us.”¹⁵ Bernini’s creations, as commissioned by Scipione Borghese for the villa, are reflections of another function provided by the collection itself for other artists of the same period.

In addition to education, the use of Borghese’s collection for entertainment is evident through the villa’s “diplomatic function” in which it served as “the venue for

¹³ John Evelyn, *Diary*, ed. William Bray (New York: M. Walter Dunne Publisher, 1901), 176.

¹⁴ Magnuson, *Rome in the Age of Bernini*, 186.

¹⁵ Domenico Bernini, *The Life of Gian Lorenzo Bernini*, trans. Franco Mormando (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2011), 101.

receptions for foreign ambassadors arriving in Rome to pay homage to the pope.”¹⁶ Villa Borghese is an example of the generosity provided by the Borghese family extended to a portion of the public, including aspiring artists and established elite. Using the Villa Borghese to host guests proves its inherent function as a site of entertainment. This entertainment function could also have furthered the appreciation for Baroque works of art, especially when considering that the collection introduced the Baroque style and acquainted visitors with the very latest trends of Italian art. In addition, Scipione Borghese’s display of art could have encouraged the visitors to compare subjects of antique and Baroque works to one another based on their location within the larger collection.

Borghese’s role as host can be further explored through analysis of the marble epigraph found on the property. Referred to as *lex hospitalis* by a panel in the Galleria Borghese, the epigraph is carved with Scipione’s welcome to the visitors. Written in Latin, translated it reads:

I, the custodian of Villa Borghese on the Pincio, declare the following. Whoever you are, provided you are a free man, do not fear the fetters of the law here. Go wherever you want to, ask for whatever you desire, leave whenever you wish. Here things are provided more for the visitor than for the owner in this Golden Age when the security of the times has made everything golden for upright guests.¹⁷

The epigraph exemplified Borghese’s generosity in allowing guests to wander and view grounds of the villa at their leisure. It also encouraged the visitor to experience freedom and act on their own desires while at the site. This ideal presented by the epigraph, and thus by Borghese himself, furthered the idea of the patron’s capability to cater towards the whims of the visitor.

¹⁶ Moreno and Stefani, *The Borghese Gallery*, 24.

¹⁷ Villa Borghese Epigraph, Galleria Borghese, Rome.

Perhaps the reference to the Golden Age within the epigraph originates from the literary work, *Works and Days*, written by the ancient Greek poet, Hesiod. This reference is another way that the villa combines antiquity within the context of the modern structure. In the section of *Works and Days* entitled, “The Ages of Man,” the author explains during the first age of man, Cronos provided a time that mortals “lived like gods without sorrow of heart, remote and free from toil and grief: miserable age rested not on them... They dwelt in ease and peace upon their lands with many good things, rich in flocks and loved by the blessed gods.”¹⁸ The utilization of the Golden Age in the epigraph signifies a time of peace and prosperity, like that of the experience provided at Villa Borghese for the visitors. It also exemplifies the role of the villa as a kind of paradise among men and nature. This is especially true when considering the original placement of the villa within the larger grounds of the park landscape.

In visitor accounts, such as John Evelyn’s diary, Villa Borghese was perceived as a paradise. On November 17, 1644, Evelyn wrote that the property was “an elysium of delight, having in the centre of it a noble palace... This garden abounded with all sorts of delicious fruit and exotic simples, fountains of sundry inventions, groves, and small rivulets.”¹⁹ The outward display of the grounds, as recorded by Evelyn, is a reflection of the splendors awaiting the visitor within the villa’s interior. In addition to the imagery of paradise, the epigraph evokes the concept of the “golden race” described by Hesiod in comparison with the silver, bronze, heroic, and iron races.²⁰ In reference to the iron race,

¹⁸ Hesiod, *Homeric Hymns, Epic Cycle, Homerica*, trans. Evelyn-White (London: William Heinemann, 1914), <http://www.theoi.com/Text/HesiodWorksDays.html>

¹⁹ Evelyn, *Diary*, 115.

²⁰ Hesiod, *Homeric Hymns, Epic Cycle, Homerica*, <http://www.theoi.com/Text/HesiodWorksDays.html>

“men never rest from labour and sorrow by day, and from perishing by night; and the gods shall lay sore trouble upon them...The father will not agree with his children, nor the children with their father, nor guest with his host, nor comrade with comrade.”²¹ The successional decline in the races after that of the golden one makes the setting of the Villa Borghese appear even more idyllic for visitors.

Another aspect of Villa Borghese that clearly defines the site’s entertainment function is the inclusion of a theater as an outdoor feature. The theater, also referred to as Prospettiva del Teatro or “Façade of the Theatre,” is located between the second and third enclosures that are located behind the villa.²² The presence of the theater within the context of the gardens is another way the villa stands as a representation of an ideal among nature. The theater “was decorated with inscriptions, reliefs and statues...and the famous marble tablet on which Scipione’s ‘welcoming law’ was written that bade visitors to freely enjoy the amenities the place had to offer.”²³ The presence of the theater, with the inclusion of the marble epigraph mentioned previously, attests to Scipione Borghese’s appreciation for the arts as a whole, not solely just painting or sculpture. The theatrical atmosphere that is created in the gardens is an echo of the interior of the villa.

While the theater in the garden of the villa is rather small in stature and shallow in depth, the architecture follows some of the regulations set by Vitruvius in Book V of *Ten Books of Architecture*, written between 30-20 BCE.²⁴ In the section about the plan of a theater, Vitruvius explains that an “architect ought to consider to what extent he must

²¹ Hesiod, *Homeric Hymns, Epic Cycle, Homerica*, <http://www.theoi.com/Text/HesiodWorksDays.html>

²² Campitelli, *Villa Borghese*, 43.

²³ Campitelli, *Villa Borghese*, 43-44.

²⁴ Mark Cartwright, “Vitruvius,” *Ancient History Encyclopedia*, last modified April 22, 2015, <https://www.ancient.eu/Vitruvius/>

follow the principal of symmetry, and to what extent it may be modified to suit the nature of the site or the size of the work.”²⁵ The symmetry that is evident in the Villa Borghese outdoor theater is in the columns and inlays present in the façade. Much like the rooms inside the villa, there are both engaged and freestanding columns that vary in width and design, but are symmetrical in number and length (figure 3). It is significant that the villa’s outdoor theater is not large despite the extensive size of the garden. This intimacy is similar to the way that the rooms housing Bernini’s sculptures in the villa are designed. The showcase of the art collection becomes more of a private experience for guests.

Another aspect of Vitruvius’ theater design that is apparent in the villa’s outdoor theater is in its location within nature. According to Vitruvius, the “space in the middle, between the colonnades and open to the sky, ought to be embellished with green things; for walking in the open air is very healthy.”²⁶ While Vitruvius continues to describe the benefits of exposing the theater to the sky, perhaps the original purpose of the villa’s theater was to achieve the same healthy experience for the audience. The theater itself has an entrance “where a row of cypresses stood in front of a laurel grove.”²⁷ Not only would an open-air theater be beneficial for the visitors, but it would also allow the park gardens to be viewed and appreciated at the same time. Again, the utilization of the space focuses on the experience of the audience, much like the display of Borghese’s collection in the interior of the villa caters to the visitors.

Theater architects such as Andrea Palladio, the creator of the Teatro Olimpico in Vincenzo, Italy, considered Vitruvius to be the leading expert on designs of Roman

²⁵ Vitruvius, *Ten Books of Architecture*, trans. Morris Hickey Morgan (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1914), 150.

²⁶ Vitruvius, *Ten Books of Architecture*, 155.

²⁷ Campitelli, *Villa Borghese*, 43.

theaters. Palladio used Vitruvius' concept about the proper structure of Roman theaters as inspiration for his own architectural feats.²⁸ Perhaps Palladio's Teatro Olimpico was an inspiration for the villa's theater architecture. Despite the fact that the villa's theater is not accommodated with sufficient space for large crowds, or even the seating that appears as a fundamental aspect of the Teatro Olimpico, the architectural design is similar. The similarity between the Prospettiva del Teatro at Villa Borghese and the Teatro Olimpico lies in the façade. In the case of the Teatro Olimpico, Palladio's stage and "Its grandiose façade is the point of reference...it reduces the perspectives to minor and subordinate elements in stage-setting and in the total architectural composition."²⁹ Much like the stage portion of the villa's theater, the design of the Teatro Olimpico has symmetrical columns and alcoves in which statuary was once housed.

Another aspect of the Teatro Olimpico that is similar in concept to the Prospettiva del Teatro at Villa Borghese is in the architectural relationship between the performers and the audience. In the Olimpico "an attempt is made to confront the true problems of the theatre- and the problems of the theatre all turn in this central and essential question of the relation of actors to spectators- as architectural problems, and find an organic and unitary solution to them in the terms proper to this art."³⁰ In the case of the Teatro Olimpico, the solution is the illusion presented by the architecture of the stage and the surrounding seating. For Borghese's Prospettiva del Teatro, the absence of seating allows the audience to be uninhibited by the structure of that aspect of the architecture. In the sense that there are no physical barriers between the audience and the performers, the

²⁸ Donald C. Mullin, "The Influence of Vitruvius on Theatre Architecture," *Educational Theatre Journal* 18, no. 1 (Mar. 1966): 29.

²⁹ Licisco Magagnato, "The Genesis of the Teatro Olimpico," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 14, no. 3/4 (1951): 215.

³⁰ Magagnato, "The Genesis of the Teatro Olimpico," 214.

guests feel more involved in the performance in the garden. This experience is transferrable to the sculptures in the villa, in which there are no barriers preventing viewer engagement with the works of art.

It is also significant that Gian Lorenzo Bernini and his father, Pietro Bernini, worked on boundary markers that surround the theater and other monuments around the enclosures (figure 5). The markers are “works of great interest created using a skillful blend of ancient and modern elements.”³¹ Much like the other aspects of the landscape discussed earlier, the decision to include the busts in the outside design provides more evidence of the combination of old and new artistic ideals in the public presentation of the Villa Borghese. As at least four of the boundary markers worked on by Gian Lorenzo Bernini were placed among the outdoor theater, one can begin to understand the significance of the other contributions made by the artist in the context of the villa interior.³² The function of Bernini’s sculptural contribution to Borghese’s interior art collection is similar to that of the *Prospettiva del Teatro*. Both provide potential for visitors to experience performances on a visual scale.

The entertainment function of the Villa Borghese is central to the display of Scipione’s collection of art. Scipione provided both antique and Baroque pieces for visitors to view and experience in conversation with one another. While Villa Borghese today incorporates both painting and sculptural works, initially the “*casino* at the Villa Borghese was mainly devoted to the cardinal’s array of sculptures.”³³ This included Bernini’s sculptural group among the works representing the antique. Fundamentally, the architecture of the villa’s interior was initially designed to house the Borghese art

³¹ Campitelli, *Villa Borghese*, 43.

³² Campitelli, *Villa Borghese*, 43.

³³ Magnuson, *Rome in the Age of Bernini*, 185.

collection. This is evident in the way that the “sequence of rooms was designed expressly to house the works of art.”³⁴ In terms of the design of the architecture, “Neither the paintings nor the sculpture was organized historically in the sense of providing a consistent chronological or geographical survey of the kind we expect to find in a modern museum.”³⁵ In this sense, the Galleria displays Bernini’s sculptural work today in much the same way that they were presented at the time of their creation.

Among the more notable permanent installments of the collection are the early sculptural works of Bernini. As discussed previously, Bernini already had contributed to the Villa Borghese through the boundary markers in the garden. His work within the interior of the villa included four sculptural groups that were completed in the early seventeenth century. These sculptures include *David*, *Apollo and Daphne*, *Rape of Proserpine*, and *Aeneas and Anchises*. The large-scale sculpture, *Rape of Proserpine*, was initially commissioned by Scipione Borghese as a gift for Ludovico Ludovisi as “a bid for the cardinal’s goodwill.”³⁶ Now the Galleria Borghese currently displays all four of Bernini’s sculptures in addition to *Rape of Proserpine*. Each of the sculptures is featured in individual rooms among other pieces from Scipione’s collection. The blend created in the inclusion of Bernini’s works and works from antiquity enhance the viewer’s theatrical experience by way of display and presentation.

³⁴ Campitelli, *Villa Borghese*, 23.

³⁵ Carole Paul, *The Borghese Collections and the Display of Art in the Age of the Grand Tour* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 3.

³⁶ Magnuson, *Rome in the Age of Bernini*, 207.

Section Two: Bernini's Participation in the Theater

In understanding Bernini's work within the context of the Villa Borghese's interior setting, it is important to consider the artist's own involvement in the theater. By doing so, the viewing experience of the art in the Villa can be related to aspects of the theater such as scenography, placement, and interactions with the viewers. Bernini's participation in the theater shows his affinity for visual arts of more than one kind. This can be further explored in the artist's sculptural work that is present at the Villa Borghese, which displays Bernini's masterful combination of multiple artistic disciplines, such as sculpture and theater. While Bernini's exploration into the theater occurred after his early work at Villa Borghese, the sculptural group commissioned by Scipione displays the artist's early interest in the aspects of presenting visual art similar to that of a theatrical production.

In a diary entry dated November 19, 1644, John Evelyn, an English traveler, described Bernini as a "sculptor, architect, painter, and poet, who a little before my coming to the city, gave a public opera, wherein he painted the scenes, cut the statues, invented the engines, composed the music, writ the comedy, and built the theater."³⁷ Bernini's extensive knowledge about the intricacies of producing a performance suggests his understanding of important aspects of the theater. Other accounts from Evelyn's diary detail the author's fascination with Bernini's works of sculpture, such as those found within St. Peter's Basilica and the Piazza Navona. John Evelyn's recognition of Bernini's talent within the realm of the theater, in addition to his sculptural work, shows that the artist had the capacity to incorporate many artistic interests into one performance or work

³⁷ Evelyn, *Diary*, 120.

of art. This concept of a unity of arts is further explored in the artist's portrayal of the villa sculptures.

Bernini's interest in invention and illusion, as detailed by Evelyn, perhaps stemmed from "Nicola Sabbatini, who in 1638 wrote *Pratica di Fabricar Scene, e machine ne' Teatri*...Sabbatini explained how to make a figure appear to be burning on the stage, how to make mountains materialise or clouds go up or down, how to turn a person to stone."³⁸ According to an inventory of books made posthumously, Bernini's library included Sabbatini's book within the artist's library collection.³⁹ This suggests that Bernini was acquainted with Sabbatini's ideas about theater performance and drew inspiration from the author in his own productions. The creation of illusions, outlined in the description of Sabbatini's written work, indicates a level of viewer interaction that is needed for the success of the performance. Viewer interaction based on illusions is inherent to Bernini's own productions, such as *The Flooding of the Tiber*, in which the audience is confronted with a fake flood.⁴⁰

As described by John Evelyn in his diary, Bernini's work in the theater primarily centered on the staging of operatic performances and comedies. The emergence of opera occurred during the seventeenth-century largely through efforts made by the Florentine group of intellectuals called the Camerata.⁴¹ In this sense, Bernini actively participated in the theater arts during the time that opera first garnered popularity in Italy. Through the Camerata's invention, "Opera became a force of immense social significance in the Baroque. It established the theater as a center of musical art alongside the palace, church,

³⁸ Sarah McPhee, "Bernini's Books," *The Burlington Magazine* 142, no. 1168 (Jul. 2000): 443.

³⁹ McPhee, "Bernini's Books," 442.

⁴⁰ Bernini, *The Life of Gian Lorenzo Bernini*, 133.

⁴¹ Joseph Machlis, *The Enjoyment of Music: An Introduction to Perceptive Listening* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company Inc., 1963), 391.

and home.”⁴² This connection between the theater and other establishments of public and private activity is exemplified in the presence of theatrical elements at Villa Borghese. By translating his artistic talents into the interpretation of the visual performance found in theater, Bernini infiltrated other social and cultural spheres of art outside of the Villa Borghese.

One of the main goals of the Camerata group was to establish a genre of music that could “resurrect the musical-dramatic art of ancient Greece.”⁴³ Much like the setting of the Villa Borghese that combines both traces of antiquity in the establishment of seventeenth-century modernity, the introduction of the opera relied on stories from antiquity to produce performance material. The first of the operas to be performed in Italy was *Euridice*, “presented in 1600 at the marriage of Henry IV of France to Maria de’ Medici.”⁴⁴ The plot of the opera is based on the Greek myth of Orpheus and Eurydice. In the myth, Orpheus travels to the underworld to rescue his lover, Eurydice, from a fatal snakebite. While on the return journey, Orpheus looks back at Eurydice and condemns her to stay among the dead.⁴⁵

Jacopo Peri, a member of the Camerata, was the composer of the *Euridice* opera.⁴⁶ The myth on which the opera is based contains music as a fundamental theme due to Orpheus’ vocal and instrumental talent. Once in the underworld, Orpheus’ “words, the music made the pale phantoms weep: Ixion’s wheel was still, Tityos’ vultures left the liver, Tantalus tried no more to reach for the water... The Furies wept. Neither the king

⁴² Machlis, *The Enjoyment of Music*, 391.

⁴³ Machlis, *The Enjoyment of Music*, 390.

⁴⁴ Machlis, *The Enjoyment of Music*, 391.

⁴⁵ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. Rolfe Humphries (Indiana University Press, 1960), 234-236.

⁴⁶ Machlis, *The Enjoyment of Music*, 391.

nor consort had harshness to refuse him, and they called her, Eurydice.”⁴⁷ Through his music and song, Orpheus is able to convince the god of the underworld to allow Eurydice to return to the land of the living with him. The use of music is a pivotal part of the myth’s plot and the protagonist’s near success. In choosing this myth for the opera, the Camerata made a statement about the importance and relevance of music in interpretations of ancient myths and the performance of modern productions.

In addition to the music, the tragedy that befalls Orpheus and Eurydice is interpreted through the lyrics of the opera. The expression of emotion was fundamental to the Baroque opera, which “taught composers to depict the passions and the affections, the lyric contemplation of nature, the quintessence of love, hate, fear, jealousy, exaltation.”⁴⁸ While the origin of the myth creates distance between the characters and the audience based on the mythical subject material, the focus on emotion and shared human experience makes the opera more accessible to the audience viewing the actions of the characters. The connection to antiquity and relating to the past also adds to the element of entertainment found within the performance of the opera. Themes and subjects surrounding the myths from ancient Greece were popular among other artistic disciplines in the seventeenth-century, including early sculptural works by Bernini such as *Rape of Proserpine*, *Aeneas and Anchises*, and *Apollo and Daphne*.

As for Bernini’s involvement in the opera, the artist contributed to two Barberini operas. The first opera was entitled *Chi soffre speri*, or “He Who Suffers May Hope,”⁴⁹ for which Bernini “recreated on stage a bustling county fair with live animals, the garden

⁴⁷ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 235.

⁴⁸ Machlis, *The Enjoyment of Music*, 404.

⁴⁹ Rita Laurance, “Virgilio Mazzaocchi: Chi Soffre Speri, opera,” All Music, accessed December 22, 2018, <https://www.allmusic.com/composition/chi-soffre-speri-opera-mc0002498562>

of the Barberini palace itself with passing carriages and a ball game, and a sunrise and sunset.”⁵⁰ For the second opera, *L’innocenza difesa*, or “Defend Innocence,” Bernini “was indirectly responsible, the sunset was repeated and one scene included a fireworks display over a view of Castel Sant’Angelo.”⁵¹ The Barberini family was as influential as the Borghese family, as both families saw members ascend to the papacy during the seventeenth-century. Bernini’s association to the Barberini family’s theater performances is a testament to the artist’s prestige.

One of the ways Bernini was commended for his contributions to the theater was through his crafted performance illusions. In Bernini’s biography, written by his son Domenico, we learn that one of the comedies that Bernini helped produce featured a flooding scene with real water. As mentioned previously, during the play entitled *The Flooding of the Tiber*, the water “flowed across the stage and spilled over with a rush toward the seats of the spectators. The latter, in turn, taking this simulation for a real flood, became so terrified that, believing an accident that which was in fact done artfully on purpose, rose in haste to escape.”⁵² In creating the illusions of the stage, the performance appears more real in the eyes of the audience. The illusory aspects seen in *The Flooding of the Tiber* presented the audience with theater that involved them in the performance and relied on viewer participation to determine the success of the production.

This type of viewer involvement meant “the spectator, in an instant, became an actor, conscious of himself as an active, if disconcerted, participant in the ‘happening.’

⁵⁰ Irving Lavin, *Visible Spirit: The Art of GianLorenzo Bernini* (London: The Pindar Press, 2007), 18.

⁵¹ Lavin, *Visible Spirit*, 18.

⁵² Bernini, *The Life of Gian Lorenzo Bernini*, 133.

The crucial thing is that when he returned to his ordinary level of existence he became aware that someone had created this response.”⁵³ The response created in the case of *The Flooding of the Tiber* was the genuine fear felt by the audience. Through this evocation of emotion from the viewers, the performance becomes one in which the audience actively participates. Bernini’s creation of the flood illusion within the controlled environment of the theater allowed the artist to anticipate the response and use it to enhance the viewer experience. This type of experience is echoed in other works of Bernini, especially those housed at Villa Borghese, which focus on viewer interaction.

With the intention of creating illusion, Bernini used size and proportion to enhance the viewing experience of his performances. In Paul Fréart de Chantelou’s *Diary of the Cavaliere Bernini’s Visit to France*, the author described Bernini’s illusory technique. According to Chantelou, Bernini said, “it was better to stage a spectacle of a size that would ensure it the swift and lively effect necessary for its success, than to make it so big that the result was slow and dreary.”⁵⁴ In this particular instance in the diary, Chantelou was explaining Bernini’s use of machinery in his productions, but the concept of illusion based on size of spectacle can also be applied to the artist’s sculptures at the villa. The figures depicted at the villa are larger than life, but are not so large as to make the illusion of movement in the overall composition unbelievable in the eyes of the audience viewing them.

As for the proportion of Bernini’s sculptures at Villa Borghese, the figures are balanced by their relative position to one another within each composition. According to

⁵³ Lavin, *Visible Spirit*, 19-20.

⁵⁴ Paul Fréart de Chantelou, *Diary of the Cavaliere Bernini’s Visit to France*, ed. Anthony Blunt, annot. George C. Bauer, and trans. Margery Corbett (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 84.

Chantelou, Bernini believed “one of the most important things was to have a good eye in assessing the *contrapposti*, so that things should not only appear simply to be what they were, but should be drawn in relation to objects in their vicinity that change their appearance.”⁵⁵ The figures in the composition of *Apollo and Daphne* were created proportionally to one another within the work itself. The figure of Apollo does not appear larger than Daphne, but instead they are similar in size. The portrayal of the figures in equal size lends to the viewer’s belief in the action of the narrative, as well as indicates an equal importance of each of the figures’ role in the narrative. This proportionality also applies to Bernini’s other figural works at the villa that feature multiple figures, such as *Rape of Proserpine* and *Aeneas and Anchises*.

In addition to the idea of illusion, Bernini used the display of theater performances to enhance the audience’s ability to perceive his art as an imitation of real life. By way of designing the performance, Bernini “recommended a stage no more than twenty-four feet deep, and advised against scenes that could be seen from only one point.”⁵⁶ The specifics on the depth of the stage led to the performance presentation to occur closer to the audience. With the shallow quality of the stage, the design is also reminiscent of the *Prospettiva del Teatro* found within the gardens of the villa. The shared space between the actors and audience allows for more viewer involvement in the production. Bernini’s use of multiple perspectives in his performances provided the audience with views that enhanced their experience. As with the incorporation of the illusions, the audience becomes more invested in the actions on the stage with the various dimensions of viewing.

⁵⁵ Chantelou, *Diary of the Cavaliere Bernini’s Visit to France*, 139.

⁵⁶ Lavin, *Visible Spirit*, 19.

A similar dimension of viewing occurs at the Villa Borghese because the four sculptural groups created by Bernini play on the perspectives of the visitors. The current positions of the *Apollo and Daphne*, *Rape of Proserpine*, *David*, and the *Aeneas and Anchises* sculptures allow the visitors of the gallery to view each from all sides. Much like Bernini's opinion on the multi-perspective theater scenes, his sculptural groups also provide visitors with different views of his work. Each of the sculptures is placed in a separate room, in which the works are the central focus of the space. Works of art such as paintings and sculptures by other artists are also included in the rooms with the four sculptures, but those made by Bernini dominate the spaces in terms of their size and prominence. In this sense, Bernini's sculptures dominate the stage provided by the display at Villa Borghese.

While these angles are true of the position of the sculptures in the Galleria Borghese at present, this was not the case for their original display. The *Apollo and Daphne* sculpture currently resides in the same room for which it was created, but the work was displayed against one wall of the room instead of freestanding in the center.⁵⁷ Considering this placement, "Bernini must have wanted the group to be seen at the opposite side of the room, immediately upon entering. As the unwary visitor came in one of the doors he would look up to see the group from precisely the correct point of view."⁵⁸ Much like the mobility of actors in a theater, the sculptures seek to replicate similar movement through a specific placement that captures the viewer's attention upon immediate confrontation with the figures in the composition.

⁵⁷ Howard Hibbard, *Bernini* (Baltimore, MD: Penguin Books Inc., 1965), 53-54.

⁵⁸ Hibbard, *Bernini*, 54.

Like *Apollo and Daphne*, the *David* sculpture was designed for display against the wall.⁵⁹ If viewers look closely at the back of the sculpture, the rows of scales that Bernini patterned on David's armor are not complete (figure 6.1). The base on which David is balanced also appears to be truncated at the rear of the sculpture with vague shaping of the support. With the placement of *David* facing the room with his back to the wall, there was no need for Bernini to add detail in a place that a visitor's eye could not see. As mentioned before, the sculpture as a whole is now presented in the center of the room. The surrounding perspectives now offered by the change in placement show Bernini's ability to create captivating compositions, despite initial intentions for views of the sculpture to be limited to the front and sides.

As for *Aeneas and Anchises* and *Rape of Proserpine*, Bernini also created a single point of view from which the sculptures were originally viewed.⁶⁰ Much like *Apollo and Daphne* and *David* sculptures, the other two Bernini sculptures have the ability to be viewed from multiple perspectives. As for their placement in the villa today, both are freestanding to encourage visitors to view the works in their entirety. This viewpoint, although perhaps not fully realized until the changes put in place by the Galleria, creates a theatrical atmosphere involving both the art and the audience. In the same way that the theater was used by Bernini to involve the viewers, the sculptural groups at the Villa Borghese rely on similar methods to create a viewer response.

An example of this type of theatrical atmosphere can be seen more obviously in Bernini's installation at the Cornaro Chapel in the Church of Santa Maria della Vittoria. The *Ecstasy of St. Teresa* housed in the church is one of Bernini's pinnacle expressions of

⁵⁹ Hibbard, *Bernini*, 55.

⁶⁰ Hibbard, *Bernini*, 55-57.

his mastery of a combination of arts. The planning and creation of the *Ecstasy* took place between 1647 and the 1650s.⁶¹ The work presents the saint in the moment that an angel pierces her chest with a divine arrow. The arrow, a symbol of the Christian religion, induces her reaction upon receiving the revelation from above.⁶² Teresa describes her experience as pain accompanied by desire, “which penetrates the whole soul at once, the soul begins to grow so weary that it ascends far above itself.”⁶³ Bernini’s interpretation of her experience focuses on St. Teresa’s emotion in the moment of her religious contact.

Unlike the four sculptural groups at Villa Borghese, the *Ecstasy of St. Teresa* initially contained a complex view of the work with the architecture of the piece itself. In designing the inset of the chapel, “Bernini reached out beyond the focal group in order to control and direct the eyes and mind of the visitor. The architecture contains us and directs our vision to the framed revelation; it, too, plays an active part in the experience.”⁶⁴ The chapel itself is made of three walls of protruding sculpture that allow the viewer to explore each section from the front and sides. This perspective elevates the divine happenings above the viewer, but still allows the visitor of the chapel to view the perceived actions in their entirety. In addition, the perspective makes a private moment between St. Teresa and the angel accessible to the public.

Accessibility is imperative to the viewer’s experience in beholding the religious spectacle that occurs within the confines of the Cornaro Chapel. Like Bernini’s portrayal of St. Teresa, “When an event in the saint’s life is sculpted and placed on the altar, it seems to take place in the reality of the faithful. If this occurrence is a matter of vision or

⁶¹ Hibbard, *Bernini*, 128.

⁶² Hibbard, *Bernini*, 134-135.

⁶³ Teresa of Avila, *The Book of Her Life*, trans. Kiernan Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodriguez (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company Inc., 2008), 124.

⁶⁴ Hibbard, *Bernini*, 130-131.

marvel, its representation contains an incomparable promise for the beholder, too.”⁶⁵

Through the placement of the sculpture, Bernini’s St. Teresa is already appealing to devout onlookers. In addition to the placement, the emotion of Bernini’s St. Teresa is influential to the experience of the visitors within the Church of Santa Maria della Vittoria. St. Teresa’s spiritual experience, as apparent in Bernini’s depiction, becomes aspirational to viewers’ own religious experiences.

As discussed previously, the illusory effect of Bernini’s sculptural art enhances the connection to his theater production. The chapel captures “natural daylight that falls on the figures from a hidden source above and behind...part of the group as are the gilded rays behind; the whole miraculous vision is produced by a light we do not understand.”⁶⁶ Including the daylight makes the scene appear all the more ethereal as there is no obvious source of the light. This illusion is enhanced by additional gilded elements incorporated into the sculptural program. Like the water from Bernini’s *The Flooding of the Tiber*, the light has been controlled into the design to encourage a response from the viewers. In the case of the *Ecstasy*, the viewers are being awed by the miracle that is occurring before their very eyes. This miracle becomes more realistic with the presence of the light because it is evidence of the presence of God in the chapel.

In addition to the illusions present in the work, aspects of the composition explicitly address the idea of a theatrical performance. One such example is in the side panels contained within the chapel (figure 10.1). Bernini created, “spaces resembling opera boxes, numerous members of the Cornaro family- the donor, his father the Doge

⁶⁵ Damian Dombrowski, “The Sculptural Altarpiece and Its Vicissitudes in the Roman Church Interior: Renaissance Through Baroque,” in *Critical Perspectives on Roman Baroque Sculpture*, ed. by Anthony Colantuono and Steven F. Ostrow (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2014), 133.

⁶⁶ Hibbard, *Bernini*, 134.

Giovanni, and six Cornaro Cardinals of the preceding century- are found in animated postures of conversation, reading, or prayer.”⁶⁷ Including the family in the work gives credit to the patrons, as is tradition, and elevates the Cornaros as worthy witnesses. As the members of the Cornaro family are witnessing the spectacle of St. Teresa’s interaction with the angel, so too are the visitors in the church. In this way, it is as if the visitors take part in the event through the shared space of the chapel. While the *Ecstasy of St. Teresa* presents a moment suspended in time, the viewer interaction makes the scene appear as if in a continual state of motion.

The *Ecstasy of St. Teresa* is similar to another late work of Bernini located in the Altieri Chapel in San Francesco a Ripa church. Bernini’s work in the chapel titled *The Death of the Blessed Ludovica Albertoni* is another example of his sculptural work that involves theatrical elements. Much like St. Teresa, the figure of Ludovica is sculpted in the throes of a religious experience. Ludovica “lies in her final agony on a marble bed, below a large painting of the *Holy Family*.”⁶⁸ The positioning of Ludovica in conversation with the painting enhances viewer understanding of the happenings of the sculptural figure. The context of both artistic mediums makes it appear as though the actions of Ludovica occur as a result of the presence of the religious figures in the painting. In this sense, the chapel represents a culmination of architecture, sculpture, and painting in the design of one work.

The architecture of the Altieri Chapel is similar to the Cornaro Chapel in terms of the design. While the Cornaro Chapel offers more than one view of Teresa and the surrounding Cornaro family members, there is a singular view of Ludovica in the Altieri

⁶⁷ Hibbard, *Bernini*, 128.

⁶⁸ Hibbard, *Bernini*, 220.

Chapel as if the visitor can only glimpse at the occurrence. *The Death of the Blessed Ludovica Albertoni* is also distanced from the viewer of the chapel just as the *Ecstasy of St. Teresa* is. In creating distance between the sculptural figures and the viewers, Bernini creates the notion that the moment of religious experience is private. Inviting the visitor to watch the occurring scene makes the event appear to be a personal experience between not only Ludovica and the divine presence, but also Ludovica and the viewer. In this sense, Bernini is involving the visitor in the sacred space of the miracle.

Besides the central painting, there is more evidence of the Holy presence in the controlled light of the chapel. Much like the illusion of light was produced in the Cornaro Chapel, the Altieri Chapel contains a similar approach to this effect. There is “hidden illumination from windows at left and right; winged cherub heads appear to float down on the light to alleviate the final suffering of the Blessed, while the dove of the Holy Spirit hovers above to receive her devout soul.”⁶⁹ The theatricality present in the Altieri Chapel is another example of Bernini’s ability to exercise his knowledge and experience from his involvement in the theater. His knowledge transcribes well to his interpretation of Ludovica and St. Teresa in the way that both sculptures display the religious fervor of the devoutly faithful.

Both the architecture and the illumination of the chapel enhance the viewer experience through the display of the momentary. Both the Cornaro Chapel and the Altieri Chapel prominently display the figures in the midst of their spiritual and physical revelation. The momentary is further expressed in the transformation of light on the figures and the space within the chapels. Both chapels function as a transitory location where the divine presence is brought into the space of the faithful. This concept can be

⁶⁹ Hibbard, *Bernini*, 220.

explored in the way that the Altieri Chapel “niche is a an analogy for the body that it has been built to enclose: an interior penetrated by the light and by the presence of the angels.”⁷⁰ Viewers witnessing the seemingly revelatory action occurring within the confines of the chapels are reminded of their own connection to the divine within the larger context of the church.

The *Ecstasy of St. Teresa* and *The Death of the Blessed Ludovica Albertoni* are both triumphs of Bernini’s late projects, especially in the way that the artist presents emotion based on religious experience to the viewers. The *Ecstasy* was completed in 1652, while the *Blessed Ludovica* was completed in 1674.⁷¹ The sculptural group at Villa Borghese, which includes the *Apollo and Daphne*, *Rape of Proserpine*, *David*, and *Aeneas and Anchises* sculptures, was completed in the 1620s. Despite the time in between the creation of the sculptural works, Bernini’s later pieces reflect a similar approach to expressing theatrical elements present in his earlier works at Villa Borghese. His ability to incorporate aspects of the theater in both his early and late works suggests that Bernini’s interest in the theater was steadfast and lasting.

⁷⁰ Giovanni Careri, *Bernini: Flights of Love, the Art of Devotion*, trans. Linda Lappin (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 63.

⁷¹ Hibbard, *Bernini*, 220.

Section Three: Bernini's Use of Emotion in Creating a Theatrical Sculptural Group

Another aspect of Bernini's sculptural group at Villa Borghese emerges through the artist's ability to depict and evoke emotions in viewers. Bernini's four sculptures, *Apollo and Daphne*, *Rape of Proserpine*, *David*, and *Aeneas and Anchises*, invite viewer interaction through their placement and space within the context of the rooms. In addition to the displayed features of the collection's environment, Bernini's creation of emotion through his sculptures adds another layer of involvement between the viewer and the works. This use of emotion, similar to the concept of *affetti*, invokes feelings similar to that of performances in the theater. As Bernini's later involvement in the theater can attest, his understanding of human emotion is evident in his art. The utilization of emotion enhances both the compositions of the sculptures and their context among the surrounding collection as a theatrical scene.

Franco Mormando, translator of Domenico Bernini's biography of his father, describes "the expression of the *affetti*- the array of emotional states- the convincing, genuine, and stirring depiction of which was...one of the goals of his sculpture and paintings."⁷² Bernini's depiction of emotion in his art presents the figures in the works and their roles in the narratives being displayed as accurately naturalistic. Unlike the presentation of emotions in performances of the theater, the sculptures offer the viewers stationary visuals from which to interpret emotion. Despite this, Bernini successfully created emotion through the portrayal of active expressions and mannerisms in his figural sculptures. This type of technique is characteristic of a desire to present works as naturalistic in composition and form.

⁷² Bernini, *The Life of Gian Lorenzo Bernini*, 56.

As described in Domenico Bernini's biography of his father, the artist's aspirations to depict emotion were explored to the extreme in his youth. Domenico recounts to the reader Bernini's efforts in sculpting the martyrdom of Saint Lawrence at the age of fifteen.⁷³ When Bernini was planning the aspects of the sculpture "to adequately reflect in the saint's face the pain of his martyrdom and the effect that the fire must have had on his flesh, he placed his own leg and bare thigh near the burning coals."⁷⁴ If this account were true, Bernini's own reaction to the flames allowed him to become closer to the subject he wished to depict. The sculpture he created was a product of his exposure to pain and the recording of that pain in a mirror.⁷⁵ In doing so, the artist provided himself with a lifelike example to use in furthering the quality of his work. This alleged experience exemplifies Bernini's dedication to depicting raw emotion in his later sculptural works.

Bernini's approach to creating believable expressions was aided by his utilization of models and sketches. When undertaking a portrait bust, Bernini believed "the beginning resemblance is less important than the general expression that constitutes the central problem of a portrait. The details...can only be satisfactorily rendered by subsequent work done directly from the live model."⁷⁶ Like the artist's supposed use of his own reflection to create the sculpture of Saint Lawrence, Bernini used real life examples to produce sculptures that suggest real expression. The use of expression from life further aids the viewer in recognizing the emotion that is clearly defined by Bernini's artistic renditions.

⁷³ Bernini, *The Life of Gian Lorenzo Bernini*, 103.

⁷⁴ Bernini, *The Life of Gian Lorenzo Bernini*, 102-103.

⁷⁵ Bernini, *The Life of Gian Lorenzo Bernini*, 103.

⁷⁶ Rudolf Wittkower, *Sculpture: Processes and Principles* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1977), 195.

While Bernini used sketches and models to assist him in the creation of his sculptural works, as seen with portraiture busts, he relied on the tools solely as a starting point. Bernini believed “To work from sketches would mean referring neither to nature nor to the idea of it which he had formed in his mind, but to an abstraction, and his comment on this point was: ‘I don’t want to copy myself but to make an original.’”⁷⁷ The artist primarily drew inspiration from living material he wished to capture in marble. By doing so, Bernini focused more on his own interpretation of the figure or scene he intended to sculpt. Not only does this further explain Bernini’s approach to naturalism, in which nature acts as inspiration for the art, but it also explains the artist’s value of expression in his work. In turn, Bernini’s own perception of a model’s reactions and emotions enhances the naturalism found within a work.

In addition to Bernini’s work at Villa Borghese, his use of emotion in sculpture creates reactions from the viewer that encourage religious feeling. Creating works of art that are naturalistic can “inspire viewers to prayer and adoration, to religious fervor. Naturalism, in other words, is an essential ingredient in eliciting the proper response to religious art.”⁷⁸ In thinking about Bernini’s sculptures such as the *Ecstasy of St. Teresa* and *The Death of the Blessed Ludovica Albertoni*, the emotion that is present within the lifelike expressions of the figures creates a connection with the viewer by way of the viewers’ reaction. In viewing the sculptural figures in their individual raptures, there is a sense that the divine is perpetually present in the moment that the revelation is occurring. This means that the presence is actively working within the confines of the human world.

⁷⁷ Wittkower, *Sculpture: Processes and Principles*, 193.

⁷⁸ Norman E. Land, *The Viewer as Poet: The Renaissance Response to Art* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), 96.

Presenting emotion that is recognizable by the viewer, Bernini depicted expressions of his subjects in the sculptures. Some approaches to art theory indicate expression is important to artists because “the movements of the body that express the affections and passions of the soul are the spirit and the life of art.”⁷⁹ While this particular suggestion pertains to expressions found in painting, the idea can also be applied to works of sculpture as well. Despite the different media, the idea behind portraying expressions of the figures is similar for both in that it allows for interpretation of figural emotion by the viewer. The expressions are inherent to making the figures within the art more emotionally relatable and realistically convincing. Without the use of expression, Bernini’s sculptures would appear less naturalistic to the viewer.

In discussing the difference between artistic qualities in painting and sculpture, Bernini believed “that painting was superior to sculpture, since sculpture shows that which exists with more dimensions while painting shows that which does not exist, that is, it shows relief where there is no relief and gives an effect of distance where there is none.”⁸⁰ Sculpture is a representation of that which is three dimensional, while painting shows three dimensional subjects within the limits of a two dimensional presentation. In a simplified sense, Bernini’s sculptural groups at the villa are works that represent figures from myth and legend bound in the solidity of real life. Bringing myth to life, Bernini created figures based on their three-dimensionality. The three dimensional quality of the sculptures makes the works appear more believably present in the space of the viewer.

⁷⁹ Rensselaer W. Lee, *Ut Pictura Poesis: The Humanistic Theory of Painting* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton and Company Inc., 1967), 23.

⁸⁰ Filippo Baldinucci, *The Life of Bernini*, trans. Catherine Enggass (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 79.

This perceived dimensionality found in painting and sculpture also contributes to the potential for interaction between viewers and the art. In comparison, “Sculpture, whose *rilievo* [relief or dimensionality] is actual and can be perceived through sight and touch, has no need to deceive. Painting, whose *rilievo* can only be perceived through sight, is superior because it deceives the eye.”⁸¹ The illusion of depth and dimension is more difficult to create in paintings, while dimensionality is more realistic in sculptural compositions. In some ways, sculpture is more appealing to the senses than painting because it exists more prominently in the space of the viewer. Not only does sculpture appeal to the viewer’s sense of sight, but also that of touch. This inclusion of the senses further exemplifies sculpture, such as Bernini’s works at Villa Borghese, as a medium of theatrical expression.

While there is a complexity that accompanies the limited dimensions of paintings, the medium has an advantage of color over that of Bernini’s sculptures at the villa. Essentially, sculpture is “deprived of the convenience of the array of colors and obliged to work in stone, has the task of rendering its figures lifelike in a most lively but stark fashion without the assistance of artificial color.”⁸² If not in color, sculpture is more of a reflection of nature based on the dimensionality that is present in the overall composition. In addition, this idea of dimensionality is reliant on the artist’s perception of figural subjects in nature. There is less need for illusion in creating sculptures because they appear as if the subjects exist in real life. Without the use of color, sculptors rely on other

⁸¹ Steven F. Ostrow, “‘Appearing to be what they are not’: Bernini’s Reliefs in Theory and Practice,” in *Critical Perspectives on Roman Baroque Sculpture*, ed. by Anthony Colantuono and Steven F. Ostrow (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2014), 168.

⁸² Bernini, *The Life of Gian Lorenzo Bernini*, 115.

indicators of liveliness such as emotion, movement, and proportions to communicate with the viewers.

Another way that Bernini successfully depicted lifelike features of his sculptures without the use of color was through striations in the marble creating a noticeable contrast. This technique was used in Bernini's sculpture of St. Longinus located in Saint Peter's Basilica (figure 12).⁸³ The sculpture's "ridged surfaces catch the light, giving a subtle inner modulation to the large forms that create so dramatic a pattern of highlight and shadow. The grooving adds a velvety texture, a series of vibrant transitions from dark to light."⁸⁴ The type of grooving allows for the marble to appear more naturalistic because of the distinction created by the shadowing. In this sense, the texture that is used is more to benefit the sense of viewers' sight than touch. As an added effect, the lighting within the church reflects off the sculpture and provides movement in the musculature and drapery.

Conceptually, the added elements of striation are similar to Bernini's use of removed marble within the eyes of his sculptural figures. Bernini explained to Chantelou "to imitate nature in marble it may be necessary to put in that which is not there...in order to represent the dark which some people have around their eyes, one must hollow out the marble, in this way obtaining the effect of color."⁸⁵ Effectually, the hollow portions of the eye create depth in a way that is not found within nature. By nature, eyes contain depth not by the absence of material, but instead by color. Bernini's use of depth to create the appearance of color could be conceived as the artist's illusory approach to

⁸³ Hibbard, *Bernini*, 84.

⁸⁴ Hibbard, *Bernini*, 84.

⁸⁵ Chantelou, *Diary of the Cavaliere Bernini's Visit to France*, 16.

presentation of sculpture. This harkens back to Bernini's use of illusions in his theatrical productions as a way of presenting to the audience that which is not real.

As mentioned previously, Bernini used naturalism in an effort to depict human emotion as easily recognized and interpreted by the viewers. Bernini's work, as well as other "art of the Baroque expresses an acceptance of the material world, through the realistic representation of man and nature, through the affirmation of the senses and the emotions and through a new perception of space and infinity."⁸⁶ The ability of the sculptures to evoke emotion from the viewers is partially based on the lifelike qualities of the sculptural figures' own apparent emotion coupled with the apparent pliability of the marble. While Bernini's sculptures at Villa Borghese depict figures from mythology, their expressions are rife with living feeling and action. These qualities in the sculptures present the mythological as real and within reach of the audience viewing them.

In choosing aspects of nature to depict, "Bernini wanted his students to love that which was most beautiful in nature. He said the whole point of art consisted in knowing, recognizing, and finding it."⁸⁷ This approach is clear when one considers the ways in which Bernini crafted sculptures like the *Rape of Proserpine* in which the actions of the subjects are depicted naturalistically despite the underlying theme of violence present in the story of the myth. While the sculpture is rife with tension, Bernini is still able to provide balance between the figures through the curvature and serpentine quality of their forms. Bernini trained his focus on the compositional beauty created by the entwining of the figures' forced embrace, as well as the realistic emotional state presented by the scene

⁸⁶ John Rupert Martin, *Baroque* (New York, NY: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1977), 39.

⁸⁷ Baldinucci, *The Life of Bernini*, 76-77.

in the myth. In doing both, Bernini presents a sculpture of beauty within the chaotic action of the body positions.

In an effort to enhance the naturalistic quality of the marble, Bernini uses expressions to indicate emotion felt by the figures. In this sense, the “concept of expression was a fundamental part of the humanistic theory...the depiction of the outward, physical movements which accompany human actions and passions, the artist could incite the inner feelings, and therefore influence the behavior of the beholder.”⁸⁸ Bernini’s use of lively expressions in the creation of his sculptures encourages viewers to interact emotionally with and feel connects to the works of art. In incorporating these expressions, Bernini creates compositions that stimulate feelings in the viewer. The control exhibited by Bernini in reference to the sculpture material is similar to the reactions that the artist fabricated in his theater productions. The difference between the two is established in the medium.

In an effort to produce sculptural works that appear lifelike to the viewer, Bernini’s Villa Borghese sculptures are imitations of nature. According to Vasari, “the origin of these arts was Nature herself, that the inspiration or model was the beautiful fabric of the world.”⁸⁹ This identification with man, in addition to other forms seen in nature, is an indication of a foundation from which sculpture is created. The subjects of Bernini’s sculptural work at the villa have roots within the natural world despite the figures’ origination from myth and legend. This applies to the sculptural group at Villa Borghese because all four of the human figures are coupled with aspects of nature.

⁸⁸ George C. Bauer, “Introduction” in *Bernini in Perspective*, ed. George C. Bauer (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1976), 6-7.

⁸⁹ Giorgio Vasari, *The Lives of the Artists*, trans. Julia Conaway Bondanella and Peter Bondanella (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1991), 3-4.

Daphne is depicted with laurel branches, David appears to sling the stone, Aeneas carries the fire, and Proserpine shies from Cerberus.

Despite this approach of combining natural elements into the composition of the sculptures, Bernini avoided blatantly copying from nature. Bernini explains, “the art of imitating nature requires the artist to set aside his respect for nature itself, and does not consist in a simple act of reproduction.”⁹⁰ Conceptually, the idea of imitation aids in the artistic effort to depict figures and scenes naturalistically. In creating art, the artist draws inspiration from natural subjects, but does not replicate exactly that which is found in nature. Again, this returns to Bernini’s assertion of creating original works. While the myth of Apollo and Daphne was the focus of many other artistic works, including those found within the Villa Borghese collection, Bernini’s own depiction of the naturalistic events provides a unique interpretation for viewers.

The imitation of nature also presents the opportunity to choose a moment in time emphasized within the composition of the sculpture. The ideal within “the imitation of men better than ourselves, of life as it ought to be, in the pattern of an ideal tragedy, implies a highly discriminating selection of materials from the world of human character in action.”⁹¹ In depicting figures in action, as Bernini does at Villa Borghese, the artist decides to choose a specific moment in time to portray. This choice is limited only by the ability of the artist to provide the viewer with context to understand the happenings of the figures. In capturing the moment in time, Bernini portrays enough of the figures’ before and after action to indicate the story behind the action.

⁹⁰ Aline Magnien, “On Causes and Effects: Imitating Nature in Seventeenth-Century Sculpture Between Rome and Paris,” in *Critical Perspectives on Roman Baroque Sculpture*, ed. by Anthony Colantuono and Steven F. Ostrow (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2014), 221.

⁹¹ Lee, *Ut Pictura Poesis*, 15.

In addition to the concepts of expression and emotion presented in the sculptures at Villa Borghese, the notion of depicting the momentary in the works of art also aid in Bernini's goal of creating expressions of affetti. Each of the sculptures, *Apollo and Daphne*, the *Rape of Proserpine*, *David*, and *Aeneas and Anchises*, present figures in actions of movement. In the case of *Apollo and Daphne*, *Rape of Proserpine*, and *Aeneas and Anchises* sculptures, the movement is indicated in the positions of the figures in relation to one another. The *David* sculpture also exhibits a complex contortion in the body, but the figure is focused on that which is not depicted, the giant Goliath. Bernini's focus on the momentary improves the effectiveness of the affetti displayed because of the heightened emotion that is shown.

While creating portraiture and other work, Bernini wanted his subjects to be active so that he could capture them in the most naturalistic way possible. According to Baldinucci, Bernini "did not want the person he was drawing to remain immobile. Rather he wished him to move about and talk, since he said he then could see all his beauty and, as it were, capture it. He said that a person who poses, fixed and immobile, is never much himself as he is when he is in motion."⁹² Much like Bernini's purported exploration of emotion in the mirror after burning himself, his encouragement of the models to move around aids the artist in depicting that which occurs naturally. The careful study of the emotions, facial expressions, and body placement of the subjects enhances Bernini's ability to produce works that are similar to the actual movements made by the subjects.

Much like the positions of the figures, which add to the viewer's understanding of the movement, the inclusion of details in drapery and tense musculature aid in the perceptions of the momentary. The concept of temporality, or the temporary moment in

⁹² Baldinucci, *The Life of Bernini*, 77.

time, allows the viewer to feel as though they experience the sculptures in a perpetual moment of time. Not only does this engage the viewer in the space of the sculpture, but also seemingly in the happenings of the figures being displayed. The viewers bear witness to the transformation of Daphne, the kidnapping of Proserpine, the preemptive victory of David, and the wearied travel of Aeneas. This physical emersion of the viewers becomes more pronounced with their ability to walk around the sculptures and experience the different perspectives.

In the evocation of emotion from the viewer, there is also an appeal to imagination that is necessary for the full effect of the work to be realized.⁹³ The movement that is present in Bernini's sculptures aids the viewer in understanding the narrative displayed. In using one's imagination, the viewer is able to conjure the preceding events leading up to and following the moment being depicted. The temporality that is portrayed in each of Bernini's sculptures at Villa Borghese is created by a combination of frozen emotion and suspended movement. This focus on a moment in time appears contrary to the visual components that accompany theater productions, but the sculptures condense the same narrative movement present in theater by hinging on the momentary. This allows the subjects and actions to remain accessible to the viewer despite the static visuals provided.

The idea of viewers using their imagination to understand works of art is also connected to naturalism. In viewing an object, "The viewer completes the work of the artist by imaginatively interpreting the naturalistic gestures and facial expressions of the represented figures, even supplying, on occasion, appropriate speech within the context

⁹³ Lee, *Ut Pictura Poesis*, 24.

of their subject matter.”⁹⁴ The viewer’s real life experience only enhances their understanding of the art. The potential creation of speech formed by the viewer is the product of perceptive reaction to the art, especially in terms of emotion. If the viewer was learned about the subject depicted, such as the myth of Apollo and Daphne, or the kidnapping of Proserpine, the existing poetry involving the figures could supplement the imaginative capabilities of the viewer. The poetry provides context and further action than what can be shown in the construction of the sculpture.

The enabling of the imagination to create narrative based on the sculptures is aided by the artist’s ability to provide illusory aspects. Again while less necessary for sculpture than painting, the use of illusions makes the viewer perceive their sights as real. In many ways, the success of a naturalistic sculpture is when “Beholders actively and imaginatively participate in the vivid representation before them; in a sense, they collaborate with the artist to complete the illusion.”⁹⁵ The illusory effects of the sculpture are similar to those created by Bernini in his theatrical performances. Much like the fake flood and fire that Bernini created to evoke interactions with the audience, his sculptures encourage interplay between the work and the viewer. While still incited by the creation of the artist, the sculptures provoke the viewer’s imagination instead of presenting what the viewer already accepts as truth.

⁹⁴ Land, *The Viewer as Poet*, 66.

⁹⁵ Land, *The Viewer as Poet*, 180.

Section Four: An Analysis of *Apollo and Daphne* at Villa Borghese

Bernini's sculptures at Villa Borghese each exemplify the artist's affinity for theatrical presentation. The four sculptural groups, *Apollo and Daphne*, *Rape of Proserpine*, *David*, and *Aeneas and Anchises*, all engage visitors in a theatrical performance based on their place within the rooms, the subject references to poetic literature, and their appeals to the viewer's emotion. This is especially apparent when considering the modern display of the collection at the villa. Despite the change in display into the current state of the gallery, the sculptures still present an engaging view that provides interactions with the viewers. The sculpture that features the figures of Apollo and Daphne, sculpted between the years of 1622-1625, is a culmination of these theatrical expressions presented by Bernini at the Villa Borghese.⁹⁶

Apollo and Daphne is located in a corner room, between the rooms housing Bernini's *David* and *Rape of Proserpine*, and is so named for the sculpture that resides within its walls.⁹⁷ Currently, the sculpture of *Apollo and Daphne* is placed in the middle of the room with a frontal view of the figures facing the two doorways that allow access into the space. Not only does this present the visitors with an uninhibited view of the transformation from the entrance of both doorways, it also captivates the viewer into engaging with the sculpture further into the space of the room. This is accomplished through placement, which encourages the visitors to walk around the entirety of the work. In addition to viewing the sculpture from all perspectives, perhaps the placement is also used to control the flow of visitors in the limited space of the room as part of the function of the gallery.

⁹⁶ Moreno and Stefani, *The Borghese Gallery*, 110.

⁹⁷ Moreno and Stefani, *The Borghese Gallery*, 103-104.

The original placement of the sculpture is now believed to have been on the west wall of the room, closer in position to the chapel visible through the doorway on the left.⁹⁸ The sculpture's placement meant "entering the room from either of its two doors, the spectator's first encounter with the sculpture would have been a most unexpected, indeed a very surprising, rear view of Apollo's body."⁹⁹ This would also seem to indicate a lack of intention on Bernini's part to allow his sculpture to be viewed in the round like it is presented today. In comparison with other Bernini sculptures at the villa, such as *David* that has clearly unfinished patterning on the back of the sculpture base, *Apollo and Daphne* stands as finished in all angles. In moving around the sculpture from the backside of the figures, the original perspective granted the viewer a gradual narrative to observe (figures 9.1-9.2).

With the sculpture's current placement in the gallery, one walks into the room and is confronted with the two figures frozen in the moment of transformation. In comparison with the original placement of the sculpture, the unfolding of the myth is truncated in the eyes of the viewer. While there is still a sense of a spectacle that overwhelms and impresses the visitor, the original placement would have furthered the theatricality with the views being "disclosed then not in one dramatic vision but gradually and sequentially as one moves around the statue."¹⁰⁰ The difference in the placement influences the experience of the visitor viewing the subject material and both positions play on two phases common in theatrical performances. Whereas the current placement of the sculpture invites one into the space based on a shocking spectacle, the original position

⁹⁸ Joy Kenseth, "Bernini's Borghese Sculptures: Another View," *The Art Bulletin* 63, no. 2 (June 1981): 195.

⁹⁹ Kenseth, "Bernini's Borghese Sculptures: Another View," 195.

¹⁰⁰ Kenseth, "Bernini's Borghese Sculptures: Another View," 195.

presented the sculpture as a development of events leading up to the moment captured in the final transformation.

An element of the room that aids in heightening the drama being displayed in the Apollo and Daphne sculpture is the lighting. Much like the Cornaro Chapel and Altieri Chapel, the lighting enhances the theatricality present in the Apollo and Daphne room. The room itself boasts plentiful amounts of natural lighting from windows that are fundamental to the architecture of the space. Regardless of the placement of the sculpture, whether current or original, the natural lighting plays to the contours of the figures in the sculpture and enhances the movement in the overall composition. With the current placement of the sculpture, the Galleria has also supplied the room with electric lighting that primarily focuses on the Apollo and Daphne sculpture. Not only does this indicate to the viewer the importance of *Apollo and Daphne*, but it also suggests that the sculpture is the main work within the larger context of the room collection.

Another aspect of theatricality present in the original placement of the sculpture is found in its interaction with the structures of the west wall. According to early guidebooks on Villa Borghese, the sculpture would have been placed “between one of the room’s entrances and a fake or illusionistic door that seemed to give access to the space occupied by the villa’s spiral staircase.”¹⁰¹ The illusionistic door provided balance to the interior architecture of the room, but it also echoed the illusions presented in Bernini’s later theatrical involvement. Including the two doors on either side of the original placement creates a deliberate framing of the sculpture within the context of the interior architecture. The framing aids the viewer in focusing on the work as an important addition to the larger collection of art works. As Bernini’s sculptures are an imitation of

¹⁰¹ Kenseth, “Bernini’s Borghese Sculptures: Another View,” 195.

nature based on their naturalistic elements, the illusionistic door is an imitation of the real, functional aspects of the room.

This illusionistic approach to the interior decoration also continues on the ceiling of the Apollo and Daphne room. Within the ceiling there are figures that act as a second audience witnessing the transformation of the main sculpture. These figures, painted by Pietro Angeletti between 1780 and 1785, are “the allegories of the Four Seasons, executed in monochrome in fictive niches on the edges of the ceiling.”¹⁰² Angeletti’s figures were included for their alleged associations with the sun god Apollo. In this sense, there is a connection forged between the allegorical figures and the central myth of the main sculpture. While the additions to the ceiling decoration were created later than Bernini’s sculptural contribution to the room, the figural witnesses found in the spaces above the artist’s sculpture enhance the theatricality of the work that was already present with the original placement of *Apollo and Daphne*.

Pietro Angeletti created the painting that is featured in the middle of the ceiling around the same time the figures of the Four Seasons were added.¹⁰³ The painting depicts the same transformative moment in the myth of Apollo and Daphne that is the focus of Bernini’s sculpture. Not only does this create a connection between the two works of art, it also presents the visitor with a larger context to understand the myth presented in Bernini’s sculpture. The figures painted by Angeletti are in similar positions to those in Bernini’s sculpture. Apollo reaches his hands around Daphne’s waist while pitching his weight forward to balance on one of his legs. His gaze is steady on her face, while Daphne’s gaze is focused on Cupid that hovers above them with arrows poised. The

¹⁰² Moreno and Stefani, *The Borghese Gallery*, 104.

¹⁰³ Moreno and Stefani, *The Borghese Gallery*, 104.

painting provides the onlookers with added elements of the myth that Bernini's sculptures do not include.

In the painting, "the river god Peneus, Daphne's father, and Earth...both powerlessly watch the metamorphosis of the nymph."¹⁰⁴ Much like the god Peneus, the visitors of the gallery are also a powerless audience to the events occurring in the main sculpture. The main painting, coupled with the Four Seasons on the ceiling, act as an illusionistic audience bearing witness to the events portrayed in the two different medias. While Angeletti's painting portrays additional aspects of the larger myth, such as the presence of Cupid and Peneus, the painting is farther from the viewer's eye than that of Bernini's sculpture. The detail that abounds within the composition of the painting is somewhat lost in the distance that is created between the viewer and the work. In the case of Bernini's *Apollo and Daphne*, the figures are more attainable in view and study. In terms of distance and viewable detail, this suggests that the sculpture contains more potential for viewer interaction than that of the painting on the ceiling.

Villa Borghese's current display of multiple forms of the myth allows the works of art to be in conversation with one another. Both Bernini's sculpture and Angeletti's painting present the moment of transformation that is integral to the myth of the two subjects. The similarity in subject material and presentation in the paintings and sculptures in the Apollo and Daphne room is likely due to their shared space and the origin of the myth from poetic literature. The myth, as recounted by Ovid in his *Metamorphoses* describes Apollo's lustful and fruitless chase after the nymph Daphne. Prompted by Cupid's interference with two arrows, one for the love-struck Apollo and the other for the loveless Daphne, the chase ends with Daphne's transformation into the

¹⁰⁴ Moreno and Stefani, *The Borghese Gallery*, 104.

laurel tree. Forever after Apollo's encounter with Daphne, he claims the laurel tree to be one of the emblems associated with his divinity.¹⁰⁵

Viewers are aided by the multiplicity of versions of the myth within the gallery in understanding the narrative depicted in Bernini's sculpture. In addition to the placement of the collection, the subject of Bernini's sculpture is recognizable to the viewers because he utilized visual identifiers of each character in the myth. This concept is closely related to the Baroque conception of decorum in which an artist strives to present "the appropriate physique, gesture, bearing, and facial expression to each of his figures."¹⁰⁶ Apollo is identified by his hairstyle, musculature, and drapery that are similar to that of the Apollo Belvedere. Housed in the Vatican, the Apollo Belvedere provided Bernini with an example from Classical Antiquity from which to draw inspiration from in the creation of *Apollo and Daphne*.¹⁰⁷ Compared to the figure of Apollo, Daphne is easily recognized as her physical appearance transforms from human features into the elements of the laurel tree.

Apollo's identifiable characteristics were also present in the 1608 operatic production of *La Dafne* written by Ottavio Rinuccini. The opera follows the same narrative attributed to Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, especially in paying homage to the scene of Daphne's transformation.¹⁰⁸ Towards the end of the performance, Apollo's costume "displayed the same attributes as Ovid's had when he appeared on stage...both figures were clad as poets, crowned with laurel and holding a lyre and bow- thereby

¹⁰⁵ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. Rolfe Humphries, 16-20.

¹⁰⁶ Lee, *Ut Pictura Poesis*, 35.

¹⁰⁷ Bernini, *The Life of Gian Lorenzo Bernini*, 101.

¹⁰⁸ Barbara Russano Hanning, "Glorious Apollo: Poetic and Political Themes in the First Opera," *Renaissance Quarterly* 32, no. 4 (Winter 1979): 486.

underscoring Apollo's creative role in the transformation scene."¹⁰⁹ In this sense, Bernini's Apollo dons a costume to denote his role in the narrative and the character portrayed within the sculpture. The opera's reference to the *Metamorphoses* and Ovid's contributions to the narrative are thus shared between the portrayal of the myth in live productions and sculptural renditions.

Central to the concept of decorum is the idea that poetry and art contain moral reflections. More specifically, "decorum means not only the suitable representation of typical aspects of human life, but also specific conformity to what is decent and proper in taste, and even more in morality and religion."¹¹⁰ Considering Scipione Borghese's relationship to the Pope at the beginning of the seventeenth century, the works he commissioned for the villa's collection require a certain moral justification. This is especially true with the pagan mythology associated with the Apollo and Daphne myth. Perhaps the creation of such works in a structure built on the wealth of the Pope's family represented Christianity prevailing over other religions. While the sculpture of Apollo and Daphne certainly provides entertainment for viewers, the work could also function as a dramatic approach to propaganda within the larger context of the villa.

The inscription at the base of Bernini's sculpture further explains the theme of morality present in the myth. According to Filippo Baldanucci's biography of Bernini, Cardinal Maffeo Barberini wrote the inscription that reads, in translation "The lover who will fleeting beauty follow/ Plucks bitter berries; leaves fill his hand hollow."¹¹¹ The inscription justifies the inclusion of the myth within Scipione's villa, despite the outward depiction of lust evident in Apollo's chase. Delving into the moral associated with the

¹⁰⁹ Hanning, "Glorious Apollo," 490.

¹¹⁰ Lee, *Ut Pictura Poesis*, 37.

¹¹¹ Baldinucci, *The Life of Bernini*, 14.

myth, there is also a warning to the viewer present in the inscription. Like Apollo's disappointment in pursuing the elusive Daphne, those that dwell on superficial pleasures will not be rewarded with that which they seek. Instead of chasing excessive material wealth or carnal pleasures, Barberini implores the viewer to consider other means of fulfillment.

Additionally, the moral interpretation is transferrable to the audience of the *La Dafne* opera. After Daphne's transformation in the production, Apollo feels "desolation at being confronted with a static object which cannot return his affection."¹¹² Apollo's reaction to the transformation of Daphne in the opera is similar to the viewer's interaction with Bernini's sculpture. The sculpture plays with the viewer in the way that it presents the figures as lifelike, despite the work being grounded in immovable substance. A reminder of this within the sculpture itself can be found in the pebbles that populate the base behind Apollo's right heel (figure 9.3). With this inclusion of separate marble elements, the sculpture presents itself to the audience in metaphysical means. Conceptually, the opera and Bernini's sculptural approach to Ovid's myth function similarly as reflections of the moral found within the larger narrative.

In engaging the viewer in the composition, Bernini draws on the viewer's physical senses in depicting the myth. This is evident in the interactions between the figures, especially after Daphne's transformation. Apollo, as Ovid describes, "placed his hand where he had hoped and felt the heart still beating under the bark; and he embraced the branches as if they still were limbs, and kissed the wood, and the wood shrank from his kisses."¹¹³ This excerpt is clearly delineated by Bernini's interpretation of the scene.

¹¹² Hanning, "Glorious Apollo," 487-488.

¹¹³ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 20.

The artist's rendition of Apollo grasps Daphne's waist on the expanse of her flesh that has already begun to roughen into the bark of a tree. The physicality present between the two figures is also a reflection of the temptation of the viewer to touch the sculpture in a response to the lifelike depiction. For the viewer, as is the case with Apollo, truth of what is real is discerned by touch.

Also present in Bernini's *Apollo and Daphne* is the sense of vision. The exchange between the figures is not limited to that which Apollo can feel with his hand, but is instead expanded upon in their shared gaze. During the transformation, Apollo closes the distance between his body and Daphne's while she looks over her shoulder to assess the nearness of his approach. The gaze present in Bernini's sculpture "is not found in Ovid, yet it is a suggestive addition with regard to the play between the senses: the mutual gaze that has begun to be realized is the one instance in which sight actually matches the reciprocity inherent to the sense of touch."¹¹⁴ Again, this exchange of vision between the figures is similar to the viewer's interaction with the sculpture in terms of touch. As viewer, sight is an integral part to experiencing the work within the gallery placement.

In addition to Bernini's appeal to the senses, there is also an appeal to the viewer's emotions. According to Ovid, during the chase "So ran the god and girl, one swift in hope, the other in terror, but he ran more swiftly, borne on the wings of love, gave her no rest...her strength was gone, worn out by the long effort of the long flight."¹¹⁵ These emotions are apparent in the sculpture by way of the figures' expressions. Apollo is depicted with a hopeful expression, perhaps in the moment before the realization that in capturing Daphne he feels not flesh, but bark. The craning of

¹¹⁴ Andrea Bolland, "Desiderio and Diletto: Vision, Touch, and the Poetics of Bernini's Apollo and Daphne," *The Art Bulletin* 82, no. 2 (June 2000): 312.

¹¹⁵ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 19.

Daphne's neck and the thrusting of her arms into the space before her seem to translate her desperation in escaping Apollo's advances and her exhaustion from the chase. In viewing the sculpture, the audience becomes enraptured in the evocation of emotion present in the faces of the figures.

Much like actors, Bernini sculpted the figures to communicate the emotion that is felt by the individuals in Ovid's narrative. Scholar John Moore suggests Apollo "runs with affected graces, and his astonishment at the beginning transformation of his mistress is...the exaggerated astonishment of an actor."¹¹⁶ In addition to the traces of human emotion contained within the figural portrayal of the myth, Moore argues that the exaggerated quality of the faces induces a theatrical scene. Perhaps the intensified drama found within the myth, and subsequently Bernini's sculpture, is one of the reasons Rinuccini chose the theme of Apollo and Daphne for 1608 opera. In addition to the depiction of theatrical action, the momentary depiction provided by the artist heightens the viewer's awareness of the emotion present in the expressions of the individuals.

The focus on the momentary is especially pertinent to the portrayal of the transformation underwent by Daphne. After pleading with her father, Peneus, to alter her situation, "her limbs grew numb and heavy, her soft breasts were closed with delicate bark, her hair was leaves, her arms were branches, and her speedy feet rooted and held, and her head became a tree top."¹¹⁷ The sculpture emphasizes the precise temporality of the scene with details, especially apparent in Daphne's delicate fingers and toes branching and taking root (figure 9.4). Coupled with Apollo's lifted drapery and the open mouths of the figures, Daphne's transformation incites the viewer's understanding of the

¹¹⁶ John Moore, "The Villa Borghese: Bernini," in *Bernini in Perspective*, ed. George C. Bauer (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1976), 58.

¹¹⁷ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 19-20.

momentary aspects of the sculpture. As captured by Bernini's sculpture, the extreme drama portrayed in the transformation is ever continuing in the eyes of the viewer.

In returning once again to the opera, *La Dafne*, the subject of which is appropriate for both art forms of sculpture and theatrics because of Apollo's inherent involvement in the myth. Apollo claims to be "the revealer of present, past, and future; through my power the lyre and song make harmony."¹¹⁸ In Bernini's sculpture, Apollo's dominion over time is reflected in the use of the momentary in which the artist makes events preceding and following the captured instance evident. The focus on Apollo's musical inclination is also important to consider as the subject of the opera and the sculpture. Not only does the operatic production represent that which is integral to the performance, singing and music, so too does the sculpture reference musical theatrics inherent to the identity of Apollo.

In purpose, *La Dafne* "is a symbolic tale about the power of art- Apollo's art as musician and poet- and its victory over the limitations and frustrations of life."¹¹⁹ This concept transferred to Bernini's sculpture at Villa Borghese suggests a similar sentiment about the power of art. He sculpted figures that intimated a larger spectacle and theatrical narrative. As with the different mediums of art here displayed opera, sculpture, and poetry, "we note various persons of diverse ages, conditions, and customs, each with an individuality of appearance and action...which form, as do the voices of a well-balanced choir, a beautiful and marvelous composition."¹²⁰ Bernini's *Apollo and Daphne*, combined with references to Ovid's poetry and theatrics similar to *La Dafne*, is a

¹¹⁸ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 19.

¹¹⁹ Hanning, "Glorious Apollo," 487.

¹²⁰ Baldinucci, *The Life of Bernini*, 82-83.

testament to his artistic ability to appeal to an audience and integrate the elements of visual performance into his work.

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Signed: Olivia E. Peterson

Images:



Figure 1

Niobids from Villa Medici,
Rome (photo: Peterson)



Figure 2

Villa Borghese Exterior, Rome
(photo: Galleria Borghese, Rome
galleriaborghese.beniculturali.it)



Figure 3

Prospettiva del Teatro, Villa
Borghese, Rome (photo:
Galleria Borghese, Rome)



Figure 4

Palladio's Teatro Olimpico,
Vicenza (photo: Teatro
Olimpico, Vicenza
www.teatrolimpicovicenza.it)



Figure 5

Bernini's Boundary Markers in the
Villa Borghese Gardens, Rome
(photo: Galleria Borghese, Rome)



Figure 6

Bernini, *David*. Galleria Borghese,
Rome (photo: Peterson)



Figure 6.1

Bernini, *David*. Galleria Borghese, Rome
(photo: Galleria Borghese, Rome)



Figure 7

Bernini, *Rape of Proserpine*. Galleria
Borghese, Rome
(photo: Peterson)



Figure 8

Bernini, *Aeneas and Anchises*. Galleria Borghese, Rome (photo: Peterson)



Figure 9

Bernini, *Apollo and Daphne*. Galleria Borghese, Rome (photo: Peterson)



Figure 9.1

Bernini, *Apollo and Daphne* Rear View.
Galleria Borghese, Rome (photo: Peterson)



Figure 9.2

Bernini, *Apollo and Daphne* Rear View to
Front View. Galleria Borghese, Rome (photo:
Peterson)



Figure 9.3

Bernini, *Apollo and Daphne*
Detail of Marble Pebble. Galleria
Borghese, Rome (photo:
Peterson)



Figure 9.4

Bernini, *Apollo and Daphne* Detail of
Daphne's Rooting Toes. Galleria Borghese,
Rome (photo: Peterson)

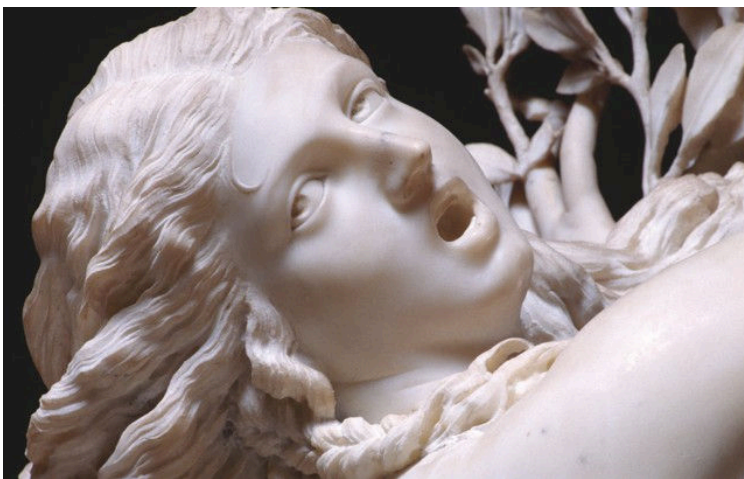


Figure 9.5

Bernini, *Apollo and Daphne* Detail
of Daphne's Emotion. Galleria
Borghese, Rome (photo: Arnold De
Luca via *The Atlantic*)



Figure 10

Bernini, *Ecstasy of St. Teresa*.
Cornaro Chapel, Church of Santa
Maria della Vittoria (photo: Khan
Academy, www.khanacademy.org)



Figure 10.1

Bernini, *Ecstasy of St. Teresa* Chapel
Detail. Cornaro Chapel, Church of
Santa Maria della Vittoria (photo: Khan
Academy, www.khanacademy.org)

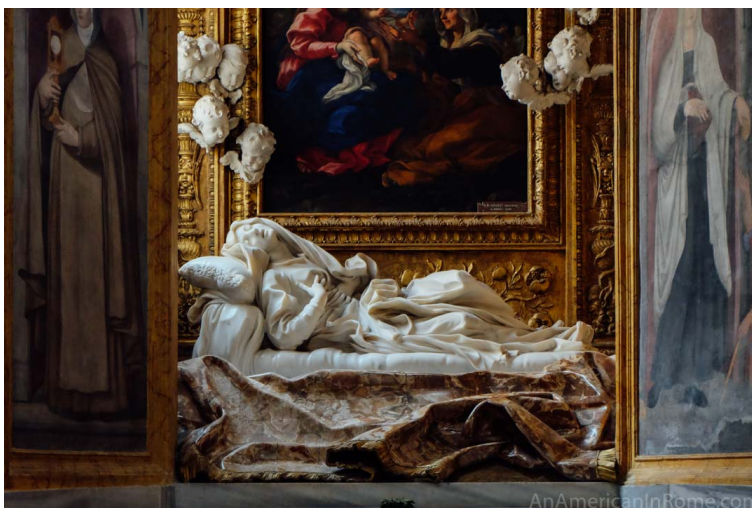


Figure 11

Bernini, *Death of the Blessed
Ludovica Albertoni*. Altieri Chapel,
Church of San Francesco a Ripa
(photo: Natalie via *An American in
Rome*)



Figure 12

Bernini, *St. Longinus*. Saint Peter's Basilica (photo: Mary Ann Sullivan via Bluffton University)



Figure 13

Pietro Angeletti, *Apollo and Daphne Room Ceiling Program*. Galleria Borghese, Rome (photo: Galleria Borghese)



Figure 14

Leochares, *Apollo Belvedere*. Vatican Museums, Rome (photo: Vatican Museum www.museivaticani.va)

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