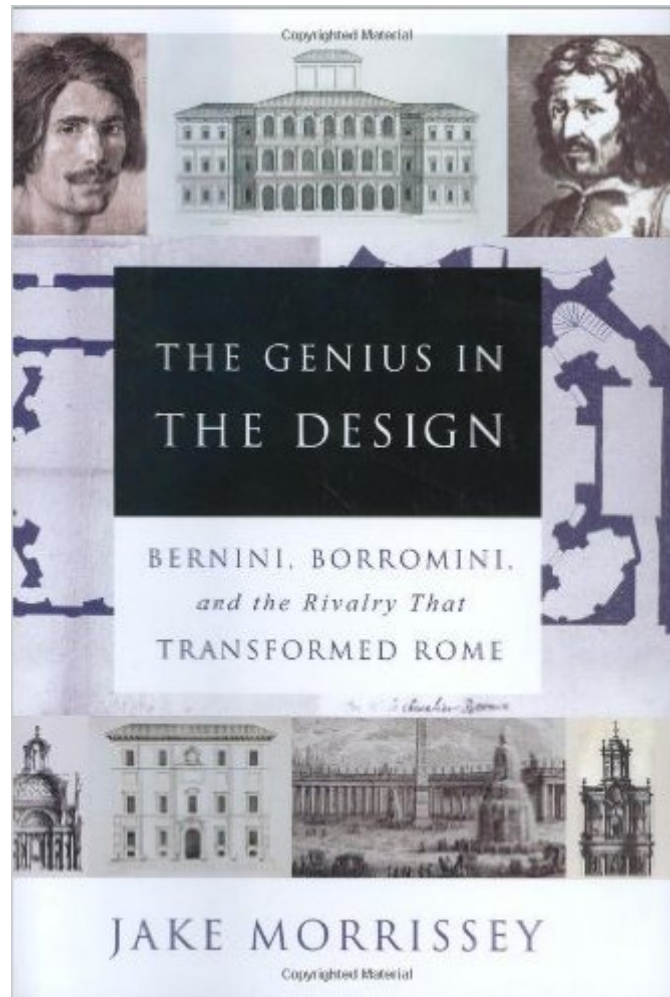


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# The Genius In The Design: Bernini, Borromini, And The Rivalry That Transformed Rome



## Synopsis

The rivalry between the brilliant seventeenth-century Italian architects Gianlorenzo Bernini and Francesco Borromini is the stuff of legend. Enormously talented and ambitious artists, they met as contemporaries in the building yards of St. Peter's in Rome, became the greatest architects of their era by designing some of the most beautiful buildings in the world, and ended their lives as bitter enemies. Engrossing and impeccably researched, full of dramatic tension and breathtaking insight, *The Genius in the Design* is the remarkable tale of how two extraordinary visionaries schemed and maneuvered to get the better of each other and, in the process, created the spectacular Roman cityscape of today. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Having read alot of books on art and architecture history..specifically holding a degree in art history and being an architect myself...I can say with some certainty that this book doesn't quite cut it for me.Essentially this book is a simple biography of both Borromini and Bernini. The Borromini vs. Bernini saga is a great one, and although the author does an adequate job of covering all the basics, I felt the story telling was lacking, dull, and frankly boring. I got the impression the author spent alot more effort creating the Bernini passages than the Borromini ones.Futhermore the book doesn't even touch on Baroque architecture, what is it? What defines the style? Why did Bernini and Borromini design buildings to look like they did? Perhaps the author assumes all readers are born with an inate knowledge of the evolution of architecture from the high renaissance into the Baroque. Without a basic understanding of Baroque architecture its tough for a novice to appreciate why

Bernini/Borromini buildings were/are so special. Yet I managed to read the text in a few days. With all that said, it just doesn't compare to the better writing of an author like Ross King. (who writes books of a comparable nature). I'm always torn with these sorts of books because they speak, in great detail, about works of art and architecture yet lack pictures. This book does include some photographs, but these types of books need more than a photograph or two. The real problem here though is the author's choice of words doesn't do justice to the subject matter. It's an average book, at an average price, bottom line, a great story told in an average way. 2 1/2 stars really but I'll give it 3 for trying. If you want to read a good biography of Borromini read Anthony Blunt's version. And by all means check out the architecture when in Roma.

When I was 18 I entered college to study architecture. Like almost all my classmates I revered the great modern architects, Sullivan, Wright, Mies, and Le Corbusier. Unlike my classmates I was also fascinated by history and this fascination and my love of architecture led to a journey of discovery. During that journey I developed a fondness for the symmetry, stability, and rhythms of Renaissance architecture. Then I found Borromini and Bernini and the sensuality and dynamism of their forms and I fell in love. In light of this I am probably not a good judge of the general appeal of this book. It is long on architectural descriptions and critically short on needed illustrations and photographs. A picture is worth a thousand words and a book on the work of any architect requires my illustration that verbalization. This is the one fault of this book otherwise it is an excellent treatment of the lives and works of these two incomparable artists.

If you love art and architecture, and even if you don't, you will thoroughly enjoy this book. Jake Morrissey introduces Bernini and Borromini as if they all shared a past life together. The story he tells is so rich in detail and so fascinating in bringing the genius of these two artists to life, that I felt as though I knew them just as well. This book pulled me into the world of 16th century Italy on page one and left me wanting to book a flight to Rome to see where this riveting story unfolded. I am rarely enchanted by books of art history, but this book bears that genius. Buy this book and treat yourself to wonderful experience. Then buy Mr. Morrissey's mystery novel "A Weekend in Blenheim" and treat yourself again.

This book sounded fascinating: Rome, architecture, golden age, personalities, drama; what else could a reader want? As it turns out, plenty. I don't know architecture, so found some of the book a slow go. The author painstakingly describes churches, fountains, etc., in detail - but a few photos

would have saved (or enlightened) a few thousand words. This was a rather dry bio of these two folks, with disappointingly little about how they and their crafts fared in the context of life in the day. For example, I found the fluidity between their "careers" in sculpture, painting, and architecture to be remarkable. Almost as though architecture had not yet evolved into a credible career. I was surprised at the extent to which the Popes were intimately involved in architecture - not just of St. Peters, but throughout the city. There is but passing reference to how Rome had to eye the impressive power of France and Spain warily; this must have colored some aspects of life in the day - including how these two gentlemen found their way. Even so, Bernini's trip to France late in life is a dry narrative. Dava Sobel's *LONGITUDE* is a much better example of treatment of historical concepts that includes description of everyday events and brings the era to life. This wasn't such a long book, so no harm no foul. But now I have to Google all these places to see what Mr. Morrissey was talking about.

*The Genius in the Design* by Jake Morrissey tells the fascinating story of the rivalry between two brilliant architects in 17th century Rome: Gianlorenzo Bernini and Francesco Borromini. Bernini was a sculptor, painter, playwright, and stage designer as well as an architect. A child prodigy, he created his first major sculpture at the age of twelve. Borromini was trained by his distant relative, Carlo Maderno, chief architect of St. Peter's in Rome. When Maderno died, Borromini expected that he would replace him as chief architect, but the position was given to Bernini instead. Although the two men worked together for a while, Borromini always resented Bernini, and over the years a fierce hatred grew between the two men, as Bernini was given commission after commission by wealthy patrons, while Borromini's work was appreciated by only a few. The two men could not have been more different. Bernini was handsome, charming, and very successful with women, and knew how to please influential patrons, including Pope Urban VIII (the pope who put Galileo on trial). Borromini was extremely difficult, paranoid about people taking credit for his work, and ended up alienating most of the patrons who could have advanced his career. During a brief period under Urban VIII's successor, Innocent X, Borromini's work was in favor. But this did not last long; the next pope favored Bernini, and eventually Borromini received fewer and fewer commissions, which led to a tragic end. Bernini and Borromini created many of the masterpieces of Baroque architecture in Rome, including St. Peter's piazza and bell towers, the Palazzo Barberini, and the Fountain of the Four Winds. Morrissey gives detailed descriptions of their works, so even if you don't know a lot about architecture, you can picture the buildings. And this book will make you want to go to Rome to see them for yourself.

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