

ROME

An Illustrated Guide to Its Monuments & Art

Brought to you by Robert and Karla

Photographed on site · Notes compiled for viewing

Plate 01

The Pantheon

Location: Piazza della Rotonda, Rome



Description

The front portico of an ancient temple, with tall granite Corinthian columns supporting a triangular pediment, fronting a great domed rotunda. An Egyptian obelisk raised on a fountain stands to the right of the square, which is busy with visitors and café tables.

Inscription & Translation

M·AGRIPPA·L·F·COS·TERTIVM·FECIT

“Marcus Agrippa, son of Lucius, consul for the third time, made this.”

Date & Age

Rebuilt by the Emperor Hadrian c. 113–125 AD, making it roughly 1,900 years old. It replaced an earlier temple built by Marcus Agrippa c. 27–25 BC, which was destroyed by fire; Hadrian kept Agrippa’s original dedication on the new building.

Artist / Creators

Commissioned by the Emperor Hadrian (the architect is unknown). The obelisk dates to the reign of Ramesses II (13th century BC), Egypt. The fountain below it — the Fontana del Pantheon — was designed by Giacomo della Porta (1575) and carved in marble by Leonardo Sormani; the obelisk was added in 1711 under Pope Clement XI.

Significance

The best-preserved monument of ancient Rome. Its concrete dome is still the largest unreinforced concrete dome in the world, with a central opening, the oculus, open to the sky. It survived the centuries largely because it was consecrated as a Christian church in 609 AD.

The Incredulity of Saint Thomas, with a Marble Angel

Location: Seventh Chapel (Chapel of the Annunciation), Pantheon, Rome



Description

Two views of the right-hand side of the Pantheon's Seventh Chapel. A large framed oil painting shows the risen Christ drawing back his white cloth to reveal the wound in his side, while the kneeling Saint Thomas reaches out to touch it and a group of apostles looks on. Beside and below it stands a life-size white marble angel poised on a swirl of cloud, its wings raised and its drapery caught in motion. A small 15th-century marble tomb tablet is set into the wall between the two works.

Inscription & Translation

... DE BERGOMO ... D·M·CCCC·LXXIII ... MARTII

The small marble wall tablet is a sepulchral inscription, worn and heavily abbreviated. The clearly legible portions name a noble family “of Bergamo” and give the date “in the year of the Lord 1474 ... of March.” The remaining lines are too weathered to transcribe with confidence from a photograph.

Date & Age

The painting was completed in 1633. The marble angel is later — the pair of angels was given to the church in 1696, placing it in the late 17th century. The small tomb tablet between them is dated 1474. (The chapel’s altar wall behind these works holds an even older Annunciation fresco from the 15th century.)

Artist / Creators

The painting, *The Incredulity of Saint Thomas*, is by Pietro Paolo Bonzi (c. 1576–1636), an Italian Baroque painter active in Rome and nicknamed ‘il Gobbo dei Carracci.’ The marble angel is one of a pair from the workshop of Gian Lorenzo Bernini (1598–1680), the defining sculptor of the Roman Baroque; the angels were donated to the Pantheon by Cardinal B. Tomasi in 1696.

Significance

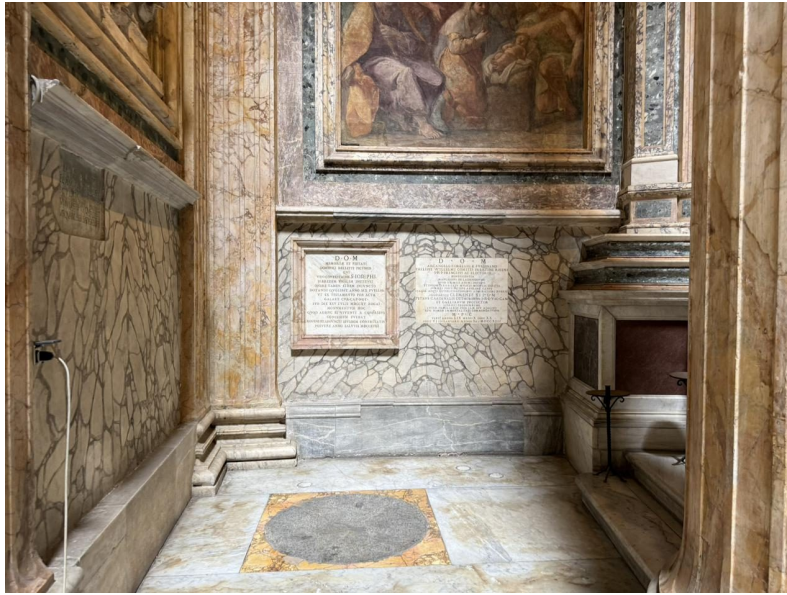
The subject — the apostle Thomas doubting the Resurrection until he touches Christ’s wounds (John 20:24–29) — was a favourite of Counter-Reformation art, dramatising faith confirmed by physical evidence. The flanking angels reflect the pervasive influence of Bernini, whose workshop shaped much of Rome’s Baroque church decoration. Together they show how the ancient pagan temple was steadily layered, century after century, with Christian art once it became a church in 609 AD.

Plate 03

Chapel of St. Joseph in the Holy Land (Chapel of the Virtuosi)

Location: First chapel on the left, Pantheon, Rome





Description

Three views of the chapel belonging to the Congregation of the Virtuosi — the Pantheon’s historic confraternity of artists and musicians. Above the altar, set in a niche beneath a gilded sunburst and the dove of the Holy Spirit, is a marble group of St. Joseph seated with the standing Christ Child (the base is inscribed JESVS). Flanking the niche are two large paintings: the Adoration of the Shepherds on the left and the Adoration of the Magi on the right. A stucco relief of the Holy Family is set into the right-hand wall. Below, two inscribed marble tablets commemorate members of the confraternity, and a porphyry roundel marks the floor.

Inscription & Translation

Right tablet: “D·O·M ... ARCANGELO CORELLIO E FVSIGNANO ... OBIIT VI ID· IANVARIII ANNO SAL· MDCCXIII” — Left tablet: “D·O·M MEMORIAE ET PIETATI DOMINICI BELLETTI PICTORIS ... ANNO SALVTIS MDCCXVIII”

Right tablet (the monument to the composer Arcangelo Corelli): “To God, the Best and Greatest. To Arcangelo Corelli of Fusignano, esteemed servant of Philipp Wilhelm, Count Palatine of the Rhine, Prince and Elector ... With the favour of Pope Clement XI, Pietro Cardinal Ottoboni, Vice-Chancellor of the Holy Roman Church and Protector of France, who had long counted him among his household, set up this monument. He lived 59 years, 10 months, 20 days; he died on the 8th of January, in the year of salvation 1713.” Left tablet: “To God, the Best and Greatest. To the memory and devotion of Domenico Belletti, painter,” who left a bequest to the Venerable Confraternity of St. Joseph to provide a yearly dowry for six girls; erected by the confraternity in the year of salvation 1718. (Both tablets are abbreviated and partly worn; the readings above give their substance rather than every word.)

Date & Age

The marble St. Joseph group dates to about 1548. The two side paintings were completed in 1661. The Corelli memorial tablet was set up after his death in 1713, and the Belletti tablet in 1718. All of this sits inside the ancient Pantheon (rebuilt c. 113–125 AD), which the confraternity adopted as its chapel

from the 1540s.

Artist / Creators

The statue of St. Joseph and the Holy Child is by Vincenzo de' Rossi (1525–1587), a Florentine sculptor trained under Baccio Bandinelli, whose work was at times mistaken for Michelangelo's. The two paintings — Adoration of the Shepherds (left) and Adoration of the Magi (right) — are by Francesco Cozza (1605–1682), a pupil of Domenichino and himself a member of the Virtuosi, both painted in 1661. The two flanking stucco reliefs are the Dream of St. Joseph by Paolo Benaglia and the Rest on the Flight into Egypt by Carlo Monaldi. Corelli's monument was raised by his patron, Cardinal Pietro Ottoboni.

Significance

This is the chapel of the Congregazione dei Virtuosi al Pantheon, a brotherhood of artists, architects and musicians founded in the 1540s by the canon Desiderio da Segni. Its members ranged from Antonio da Sangallo the Younger and the Zuccari to, later, Bernini, Pietro da Cortona and Algardi; the body still exists today as the Pontifical Academy of Fine Arts. The chapel doubles as a memorial to its most distinguished members — above all the composer Arcangelo Corelli (1653–1713), a founding figure of the concerto grosso and the modern school of violin playing, who is buried here.

Fontana del Moro (Fountain of the Moor)

Location: Southern end of Piazza Navona, Rome



Front — the Moor faces the square, a Triton at left and the basin's front lobe below.



Side — the full lobed basin with all four Tritons, before the Palazzo Pamphilj.



Rear — the Moor's back and a marine mask; the church inscription is legible behind.



Looking north — the Moor from behind, with the obelisk of the Four Rivers Fountain beyond.

Description

A monumental Baroque fountain set in a rose-and-white marble basin of concave lobes. At its center a powerfully muscled marine figure — popularly called ‘the Moor’ — stands on a large conch shell, gripping and wrestling a dolphin whose mouth jets water. Four Tritons and marine masks ride the rim around him. The fountain stands before the Palazzo Pamphilj and the white church of Nostra Signora del Sacro Cuore; looking north up the square, the obelisk of Bernini’s Fountain of the Four Rivers rises beyond. These four views were taken around the basin to show the central group from the front, side and rear.

Inscription & Translation

**On the church facade behind: “... NOSTRAE DOMINAE A SACRO CORDE
IESV AEDES DEDICATA AN· MDCCCLXXIX”**

“Church dedicated to Our Lady of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, in the year 1879.” This is the facade of the church of Nostra Signora del Sacro Cuore (formerly San Giacomo degli Spagnoli), not part of the fountain. The fountain itself carries no inscription. (The ‘PRADA’ lettering in some views is a modern advertising hoarding over a building under restoration.)

Date & Age

The marble basin was made by Giacomo della Porta in 1575–76. The central figure of the Moor was designed by Bernini and carved by Giovanni Antonio Mari in 1653–55, when the outer basin was also enlarged — so the fountain combines work roughly 450 and 370 years old. Importantly, the marble figures seen today are copies made in 1874; the weathered originals were moved indoors for preservation.

Artist / Creators

The basin and the original marine masks are by Giacomo della Porta (1575–76). The central Moor was designed by Gian Lorenzo Bernini (1598–1680) — the master of the Roman Baroque — and carved by Giovanni Antonio Mari (1653–55), commissioned under Pope Innocent X and funded by Olimpia Maidalchini. The Tritons and masks now in the fountain are copies made by Luigi Amici in 1874; the originals are preserved in Rome’s museum collections.

Significance

One of the three monumental fountains of Piazza Navona — with Bernini’s Fountain of the Four Rivers at the centre and the Fountain of Neptune at the north end. The square itself preserves the shape of the ancient Stadium of Domitian (1st century AD). The Moor epitomises Baroque sculpture: torsion, muscular energy and violent motion frozen in stone, and it shows how della Porta’s Renaissance fountain was transformed a century later by Bernini.

Plate 05

Fontana dei Quattro Fiumi (Fountain of the Four Rivers)

Location: Centre of Piazza Navona, Rome



The full composition — colossal river gods around the hollowed rock, beneath the obelisk.



The Nile (veiled head, left) and the Río de la Plata (raised hand, right) flank the Pamphilj papal coat of arms.



From the opposite side — a horse bursts out of the travertine between the figures.



Looking up — the Egyptian obelisk crowned by the bronze Pamphilj dove with an olive branch.



Description

Bernini's great Baroque fountain at the heart of Piazza Navona. From a hollowed travertine rock rise four colossal marble river gods personifying the Nile, Ganges, Danube and Río de la Plata — the great rivers of the four then-known continents — amid carved palms, rocks and animals (a lion, a horse, a serpent). Crowning the rock is an ancient Roman-Egyptian obelisk topped by a bronze dove with an olive branch, emblem of the Pamphilj pope who commissioned it. These views move around the fountain to show the river gods, the central papal arms, the rising obelisk, and the work in its setting before the church of Sant' Agnese in Agone.

Inscription & Translation

The obelisk bears Egyptian-style hieroglyphs; marble plaques on its base carry a Latin dedication to Pope Innocent X.

The hieroglyphs were cut in Roman times, not in ancient Egypt, and the base plaques record that Pope Innocent X raised the obelisk and fountain. The lettering is not legible enough in these photographs to transcribe in full, so this is given as a summary rather than a word-for-word reading. The crowning bronze dove with an olive branch is the heraldic emblem of the Pamphilj family.

Date & Age

Designed and built by Bernini between 1648 and 1651 and unveiled on 12 June 1651 — about 375 years ago. The obelisk it carries is older still: a 1st-century AD obelisk made in Roman Egypt under the emperor Domitian, brought here and re-erected for the fountain.

Artist / Creators

Designed by Gian Lorenzo Bernini (1598–1680) for Pope Innocent X. Bernini conceived the whole and supervised it, while specialists in his studio carved the four river gods: the Nile by Giacomo Antonio Fancelli, the Ganges by Claude Poussin, the Danube by Antonio Raggi, and the Río de la Plata by Francesco Baratta (1650–51).

Significance

One of the supreme achievements of the Roman Baroque. The four rivers and continents proclaim the worldwide reach of the Church under the Pamphilj pope. It is famous for Bernini's illusionistic daring — the heavy obelisk seems to balance on a rock pierced with open voids — and for figures that twist and strain as if moving like the rivers they personify. It anchors Piazza Navona, which preserves the shape of the ancient Stadium of Domitian, and faces Borromini's Sant' Agnese in Agone — the source of the old legend that the Plata recoils in horror from the church, a story impossible in fact, since the church was built after the fountain.

Plate 06

Fontana di Trevi (Trevi Fountain)

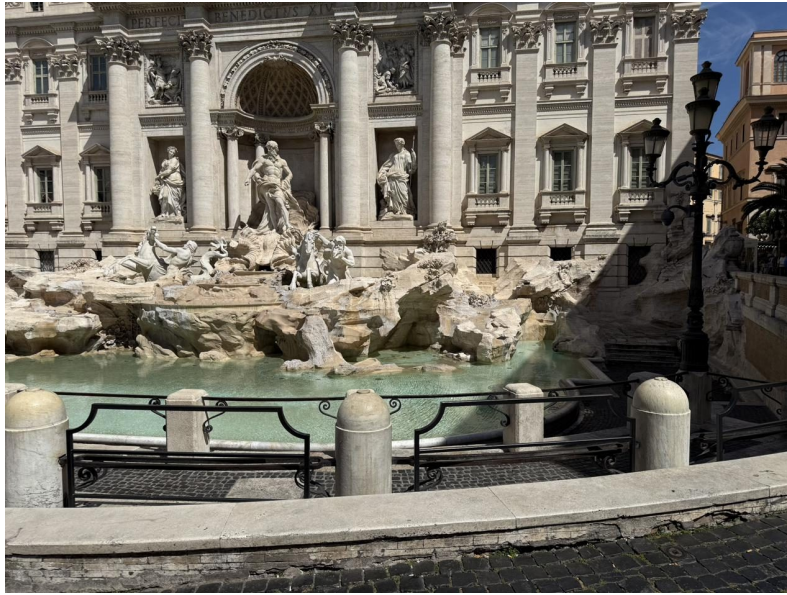
Location: Piazza di Trevi, Rome



The full fountain — Oceanus on his shell-chariot against the Palazzo Poli, flanked by Abundance (left) and Health (right).



From the left — Oceanus, the Triton with the unruly sea-horse, and the niche of Abundance.



From the right — the Triton with the calm sea-horse; the attic inscription names the popes who built it.



The travertine reef — the carved rockwork spilling toward the street, beneath the niche of Health.

Description

The largest and most famous Baroque fountain in Rome, built against the rear facade of the Palazzo Poli like a great triumphal arch. At the centre the sea god Oceanus rides a shell-shaped chariot drawn by two sea horses, each led by a Triton — one horse rearing and wild, the other calm, for the changing moods of the sea. In niches to either side stand the allegories of Abundance and Health, and carved travertine rocks spill forward into a wide basin. These views move around the fountain to show the central group, the two side niches, and the rockwork meeting the square.

Inscription & Translation

**Attic, central inscription: “CLEMENS XII PONT·MAX· AQVAM VIRGINEM
COPIA ET SALVBRITE COMMENDATAM CVLTV MAGNIFICO
ORNAVIT ANNO DOMINI MDCCXXXV PONT·VI·” (a further line of the attic
records Benedict XIV).**

“Pope Clement XII adorned with magnificent decoration the Aqua Virgo — commended for its abundance and healthfulness — in the year of the Lord 1735, the sixth year of his pontificate.” The Aqua Virgo is the ancient Roman aqueduct (19 BC) that still feeds the fountain; a second inscription on the attic names Pope Benedict XIV, under whom the work continued.

Date & Age

Designed by Nicola Salvi, who won Pope Clement XII’s competition and began building in 1732. After Salvi’s death in 1751 it was completed by Giuseppe Pannini and inaugurated by Pope Clement XIII on 22 May 1762 — about 260 years ago, after some 30 years of work. It stands roughly 26 m high and 49 m wide, and was restored in 1998–2000 and again in 2015.

Artist / Creators

Designed by the architect Nicola Salvi (1697–1751) and finished by Giuseppe Pannini. The central Oceanus, with the Tritons and sea horses, was carved by Pietro Bracci (1700–1773). The two allegorical statues, Abundance and Health, are by Filippo della Valle (1698–1768); other sculptors, among them Andrea Bergondi and Giovanni Grossi, carved the upper reliefs and decoration.

Significance

The supreme example of the Roman late-Baroque fountain and one of the most famous fountains in the world. It is the monumental display (the ‘mostra’) marking the end of the Aqua Virgo, an aqueduct in use since 19 BC. Its theme is the taming of water, and its great innovation is the fusion of palace facade, sculpture and ‘natural’ rock dissolving into the basin. Made world-famous by film and by the coin-tossing tradition — a coin tossed over the shoulder is said to ensure a return to Rome.

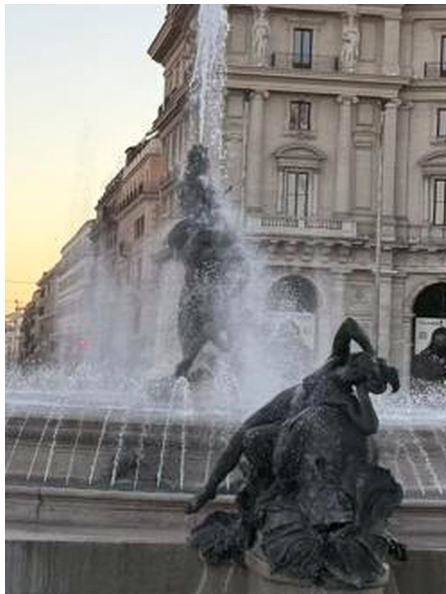
Plate 07

Fontana delle Naiadi (Fountain of the Naiads)

Location: Centre of Piazza della Repubblica, Rome



The whole fountain at dusk, set in the curved Esedra colonnades of Piazza della Repubblica.



Detail (zoomed) — the central Glaucus group: the sea-god wrestling a dolphin, source of the tall jet.



Detail (zoomed) — a Naiad reclining on her aquatic creature on the left of the basin.



Detail (zoomed) — a Naiad astride a sea-horse on the right of the basin.



The setting — Piazza della Repubblica at first light, ringed by Gaetano Koch's porticoes.

Description

A grand turn-of-the-century fountain in a wide circular basin at the heart of Piazza della Repubblica. Four sensuous bronze Naiads (water-nymphs) recline around the rim, each on a different aquatic creature — a swan for the lakes, a water-monster for the rivers, a sea-horse for the oceans, and a dragon for the underground waters. At the centre, the sea-god Glaucus wrestles a dolphin, from whose mouth the tall jet springs. Because the fountain was photographed from across the square, several of these views are zoomed-in crops to bring out the figures. Behind curve the porticoed Esedra palaces that trace the line of the ancient Baths of Diocletian.

Inscription & Translation

The fountain bears no inscription. The sweeping colonnaded buildings framing it are the Palazzi dell'Esedra, by the architect Gaetano Koch (1887–98), built on the curve of the Baths of Diocletian.

There is no text to translate on the monument itself. Worth noting in the setting: at dusk, down the Via Nazionale, the distant monuments of central Rome catch the last light, and the square — once called Piazza dell'Esedra — takes its curved shape directly from the great hall of the 3rd-century Baths of Diocletian.

Date & Age

The fountain basin was laid out by the architect Alessandro Guerrieri in 1888 (replacing an earlier arrangement first planned under Pope Pius IX around 1870 to celebrate the restored Acqua Marcia aqueduct). The four bronze Naiads were added and unveiled in 1901, and the central Glaucus group in 1912, with a re-inauguration in 1914 — so the sculpture is about 110–125 years old.

Artist / Creators

The bronze sculptures — the four Naiads and the central Glaucus — are by Mario Rutelli (1859–1941), a sculptor from Palermo and great-grandfather of a future mayor of Rome. The fountain's architecture is by Alessandro Guerrieri; the surrounding Esedra palaces are by Gaetano Koch.

Significance

One of Rome's finest monuments in the Art Nouveau or 'Liberty' style, and a symbol of the secular, modern capital of newly unified Italy. The frank sensuality of the nude bronze Naiads caused a public scandal when they were unveiled in 1901 — for a time the figures were even hidden behind a wooden fence — before the city embraced them. The central Glaucus, mastering the dolphin, stands for humankind's dominion over the forces of water.