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Italian Baroque And Rococo Architecture



Synopsis

A study of the architecture in these styles throughout Italy and Sicily between 1575 and 1750, including such major figures as Bernini, Borromini, and Pietro da Cortona.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"A complete and well illustrated survey of the architecture of Italy during this period. [Italian Baroque and Rococo Architecture] is readable and clearly written. A good introductory volume on the subject."--James O. Rose, University of Wyoming
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"An exceptionally clear and comprehensive account of its subject..."--Edward Chaney, Times Literary Supplement
"Fascinating"--Washington Post
"A good, competent survey that will be found useful as an introduction to the history of Italian Baroque architecture....A sensible and handsome addition to the literature." --Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians

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Published in 1986 by Oxford University Press, Professor Varriano's Italian Baroque and Rococo Architecture is a comprehensive introduction to Italian architecture generally described as either baroque or rococo by art historians. It is written in a clear prose that should appeal to the general reader wishing to grasp the fundamentals regarding these two styles of architecture in Italy. The

author does make use of some architectural terminology but this use is largely confined to basic terms such as narthex, apse, and chancel, used in describing the floor plans of landmark churches and other terms such as pilaster, pediment, and entablature, used to describe some of the key components of a building's facade. A three-page glossary at the end of the book provides definitions for approximately fifty key architectural terms. Varriano provides separate chapters on four of the most well-known architects: Francesco Borromini, Gianlorenzo Bernini, Pietro Cortona, and Guarino Guarini. These chapters include fairly detailed descriptions of each architect's major works plus floor plans and black and white photographs tie into the text to aid the reader. Except for Guarini, whose architectural legacy is based solidly in Turin, the primary focus of the other three chapters is on buildings located in Rome. In these chapters, plus a separate chapter on "precursors" to the baroque style such as Domenico Fontana and Carlo Maderno, the author frequently offers his own opinion on aesthetic merit. These aesthetic judgements are generally offered with the reasoning behind them and for this reviewer add to the value of the text. In addition to these better-known figures in Italian architecture, Varriano includes a large number of lesser-known architects, making this a comprehensive survey of many of the major landmarks in a large number of Italian cities. For example, in his two chapters on Northern Italy, the author presents such architects as the following: Francesco Maria Ricchini (Milan), Giovanni Ambrogio Mazenta (Bologna), Bartolomeo Bianchi (Genoa), Matteo Nigetti and Gherardo Silvani (Florence), and Baldassare Longhena (Venice). Varriano provides the same level of detail and comprehensiveness in his chapter on Southern Italy where he describes significant structures, both religious and secular, in the following locations: Naples, Syracuse, Catania, Caserta, and Lecce. For this reviewer, the several pages and numerous photos devoted to the rather unique architecture of Lecce in Apulia was one of the highlights of the entire book. In closing, let me say that I thoroughly enjoyed reading this book and feel that I've learned a great deal about these two styles of Italian architecture. This book makes an excellent supplement to a typical guidebook to Italy that usually does not provide much in the way of detailed description. It would also serve as a very good introduction to baroque and rococo Italian architecture for students of art history, architecture, or Italian culture. My reason for awarding this book only four stars instead of an expected five stars is because it lacks a bibliography. Readers wishing to seek out additional resources in this area can, however, make use of the extensive footnotes positioned at the end of the book. Highly Recommended

Excellent book!!!

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