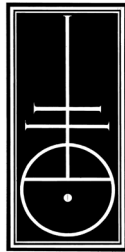


VISIBLE SPIRIT  
THE ART OF  
GIANLORENZO BERNINI

VOL. I

IRVING LAVIN



The Pindar Press  
London 2007

*Published by* The Pindar Press  
40 Narcissus Road  
London NW6 1TH · UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-1-899828-39-5 (hb)  
ISBN 978-1-904597-54-4 (pb)

*Printed by*

Estudios Gráficos ZURE  
48950 Erandio  
Spain

This book is printed on acid-free paper

## Contents

Foreword	i
I Review of Rudolf Wittkower, <i>Gian Lorenzo Bernini. The Sculptor of the Roman Baroque</i>	1
II Bernini and the Theater	15
III Bozzetti and Modelli. Notes on sculptural Procedure from the Early Renaissance through Bernini	33
IV <i>Bernini and the Crossing of Saint Peter's</i>	62
V Five New Youthful Sculptures by Gianlorenzo Bernini and a revised Chronology of his Early Works	186
VI Bernini's Death	287
VII Afterthoughts on "Bernini's Death"	354
VIII Letter to the Editor on a review by Howard Hibbard of <i>Bernini and the Crossing of St. Peter's</i>	371
IX Calculated Spontaneity. Bernini and the Terracotta Sketch	376
X On the Pedestal of Bernini's Bust of the Savior	393
XI High and Low before their Time: Bernini and the Art of Social Satire	397

XII	Bernini's Memorial Plaque for Carlo Barberini	469
XIII	Bernini's Baldachin: Considering a Reconsideration	480
XIV	Bernini's Bust of Cardinal Montalto	496
XV	Bernini's Cosmic Eagle	509
XVI	Bernini's Image of the Sun King	524

## X

**On the Pedestal of Bernini's Bust of the Savior**

I N an essay on Bernini's death and the art he made in preparation for it, I stressed the significance of the monumental support he designed for his last work, the great marble bust of the Savior, now in the Chrysler Museum at Norfolk, Virginia.<sup>1</sup> The pedestal is described in an early inventory as consisting of a socle surmounted by two kneeling angels who held in their hands a base of Sicilian jasper, on which the bust itself rested. The socle and angels, made of gilt wood, were nearly two meters high, the jasper base was 28 cm. high and 50 cm. wide at the bottom, and the bust is 93 cm. high, for a total of more than three meters. In a footnote I expressed puzzlement as to how the weight of an over lifesize marble bust was sustained in the hands of wooden angels.

I recently obtained a photograph of a splendid black chalk drawing in the Bernini codex in the Museum der bildenden Künste (Fig. 2), which is clearly an autograph study for the pair of kneeling angels and was no doubt executed in conjunction with the famous sketch for the bust in the Gabinetto delle Stampe in Rome (Fig.1).<sup>2</sup> Although we still have no direct

<sup>1</sup> 'Bernini's Death,' *Art Bulletin*, LIV, 1972, 158–86, *cf.* 171 ff; also, 'Afterthoughts on "Bernini's Death,"' *ibid.*, LV, 1973, 429–436.

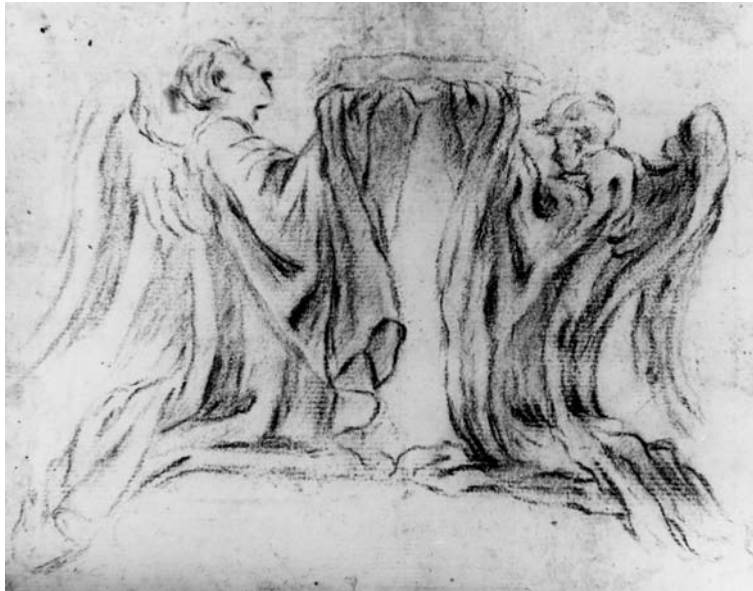
<sup>2</sup> 151 x 188 mm. I am indebted for their kindness to Prof. Dr. Ernst Ullmann of Leipzig University, to Prof. Dr. Gerhard Winkler, Director of the Leipzig Museum, and to Karl-Heinz Mehnert, Curator of the drawing collection. The drawing is noted, without identification and as a workshop piece, in H. Brauer and R. Wittkower, *Die Zeichnungen des Gianlorenzo Bernini*, Berlin, 1931, 172, n. 2.

The Rome drawing measures 171 x 254 mm. The sketches are reproduced here in proportion to their actual sizes.



1. Gianlorenzo Bernini, *Study for the Bust of the Savior*, drawing. Rome, Gabinetto Nazionale delle Stampe.

2. Gianlorenzo Bernini, *Study for the upper part of the pedestal of the Bust of the Savior*, drawing. Leipzig, Museum der bildenden Künste.



evidence for the lowermost part of the design, the Leipzig sketch makes several important contributions to our understanding of Bernini's conception.

The problem of supporting the sculpture was resolved by an ingenious use of drapery, which envelops the angels' arms and hands and falls in loose vertical folds to the socle below. The device should not be thought of simply as a deception; rather, in classic Berninesque fashion it makes a virtue of necessity, incorporating the ancient tradition of covering the hands of those who touch sacred things.<sup>3</sup> In this case the material seems to come from the shoulders and may have a liturgical, specifically Eucharistic import: the humeral veil worn during Mass by the subdeacon, who uses it to hold the paten on which the Host rests, and by the celebrant to carry the monstrance in the procession of Corpus Christi and in giving benediction with the Holy Sacrament.<sup>4</sup> The top of the socle may have been stepped, as in certain comparable projects of the late period,<sup>5</sup> but the sketch suggests that its upper surface was roughly domical; if so, it presumably referred to Mount Calvary, above which the image of the Savior is borne in triumph. This, too, has resonance in other works of Bernini, notably the equestrian statue of Louis XIV, which was shown at the summit of the rocky peak of Herculean virtue.<sup>6</sup> The reference to the Crucifixion was echoed in the half-hidden gesture of Christ's left hand, which alludes to the wound from the lance of Saint Longinus. The base held by the angels was evidently polygonal, rather than round or square or oblong.<sup>7</sup> This design, unique among Bernini's busts, serves to differentiate the portrait of Christ from those of ordinary men, and recalls the fact that the regular polygon was one of the shapes he considered most perfect.<sup>8</sup> Finally, extrapolating to the drawing the dimensions given for the base, one deduces that the angels and the socle must each

<sup>3</sup> On the motive of veiled hands, see R. Hatfield, *Botticelli's Uffizi 'Adoration.'* *A Study in Pictorial Content*, Princeton, 1976, 35 ff.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. J. A. Jungmann, *The Mass of the Roman Rite: Its Origins and Development (Missarum Sollemnia)*, 2 vols., New York, etc., 1951–55, II, 307; J. O'Connell, *The Celebration of Mass. A Study of the Rubrics of the Roman Missal*, 3 vols., Milwaukee, 1940–41, I, 268 f.

<sup>5</sup> See the sketches for sacrament altars reproduced in Brauer and Wittkower, *Zeichnungen*, Pls. 131a, 133.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. R. Wittkower, 'The Vicissitudes of a Dynastic Monument. Bernini's Statue of Louis XIV,' in M. Meiss, ed., *De Artibus Opuscula*, XL. *Essays in Honor of Erwin Panofsky*, New York, 1961, 497–531.

<sup>7</sup> The polygonal design of the base is reflected in that of the copy of the *Savior* in Sées Cathedral (partly visible in Lavin, 'Afterthoughts,' Fig. 2).

<sup>8</sup> See the record of Bernini's statement in Paris in 1665, in L. Lalanne, ed., *Journal du voyage du Cavalier Bernin en France par M. De Chantelou*, Paris, 1885, 167.

396

have been about a meter high. The angels would thus have appeared as 'life-size' adolescents; placed at eye level, they provided a direct measure of the superhuman scale of the object they held aloft.