

Ephemera, Festivals and Theatrical Representation

Religious and secular ceremonies, festivities, illuminations, fireworks and theatrical performances were intertwined with everyday life during the Baroque era. Use of theatrical tools and innovations in scenic effects and theatrical lighting, postures and gestures are all considered common characteristics of the Baroque. The new religious orders, mainly the Jesuits, played an important part in the popularisation of new artistic tools, approaches, imagery and rhetoric. Ceremonial staircases, great halls, ballrooms and gardens were sites favoured for festivities, incorporating public spaces on occasion (and helping in the realisation of new prototypes for the tools and clever tricks of perspective used by theatrical engineers and scenographers). Royal and noble courts and proud civil communities basked in the glory of what was a period of feverish theatre building. Sacred theatre and musical dramas also played an important role in education, in the schools run by the monastic orders and within religious services as well. Trompe l'oeil, illusory painting, and complex perspectival illusions such as quadratura in Bologna, which triumphed throughout Europe, were rooted in scenographic traditions. The Bibiena and Quaglio families greatly influenced scenography and stage-set design, which in turn revolutionised the pictorial and architectural traditions of Europe. At the core of Baroque theatre was illusion, which based around incredible theatrical machinery and scenery, made miracles possible. Sensational, fantastic worlds were made "real", whether the faded historical times of the past or faraway geographical sites, which were then played out in the "real world" of a given theatrical moment. It could be said that the Baroque is illusion, or that Baroque life is theatre and Baroque theatre is life.



Former chapel of St. Ignatius, Bologna

c. 1660–1675

Bologna, Emilia-Romagna, Italy



Varaždin Cathedral

1642–1646

Varaždin, North-West Croatia, Croatia



Magnificent apparatus in a form of a triumphal arch. Silver Altar and Coronation Set

1735–1736

Brno-Old Brno, Moravia, Czech Republic



Palazzo Malvasia

1746–1747

Bologna, Emilia-Romagna, Italy



Spada Palace, The Perspective Corridor

1652–53

Rome, Latium, Italy



Galleria del Senato

1675–1677

Bologna, Emilia-Romagna, Italy