Bernini's *Sant' Andrea al Quirinale and the Pantheon*

On Sant' Andrea Hubala remarked: „The concept reminds one of the Pantheon: A great rotunda, the cupola of which is largely hidden behind cylindrical walls, is surrounded by radially arranged low chapels"(1). And Magnuson observed that the niche behind the entrance is „covered by a barrel vault which juts up over the entablature, a theme derived from the Pantheon..."(2). Also the columns in front of the apse with the altar in Sant' Andrea call to mind the Pantheon, vide the columns in front of the exedrae in the inside of the Pantheon. In Sant' Andrea the columns are pushed aside in oder not to impede the view to the altar and the painting.

Wittkower was of the opinion, that the columns in front of the apse in Sant' Andrea were inspired by Palladio: „At first, one might be inclined to regard Bernini's columned aedicula as an autonomous transformation derived from the Pantheon screens, especially in view of the fact that at this time – from 1657 onwards – Bernini spent a great deal of work and thought on the Pantheon. On the other hand, the scenographic use of the Pantheon motif was foreign to Rome; only Palladio had pointed the way to it"(3). As an example a photograph of the columns in front of the monks' choir in Palladio's Redentore is shown.

With due respect to Wittkower, it seems more likeky to me that Bernini was inspired by the Pantheon he knew so well. There the columns in front of the exedrae are also used scenographically because the exedrae are lighted, although poorly, through openings in the attica above them. In Sant' Andrea bright light falls into the apse with the altar and the painting through a lantern above the apse.

In view of the resemblances between Sant' Andrea and the Pantheon it seems that with Sant' Andrea, the construction of which on an oval plan started in 1658, Bernini intended to build a variant of the circular rotunda of the Pantheon. Already Borromini's Sant' Ivo, completed thirteen years earlier (with the exception of the lantern) showing „the typical criteria of a rotunda"(4), had been a variant on a hexagonal plan of the Pantheon (5). With Sant' Andrea Bernini could also have hinted to his competitor and former assistant Borromini: „Anch'io!"

<div align="right">Jürgen Bay</div>

(1) E. Hubala, Renaissance und Barock, Frankfurt am Main 1986, S.67: „Der Baugedanke erinnert an das Pantheon Eine große Rotunde, deren Kuppel weitgehend von den aufgehenden zylindrischen Mantelmauern verdeckt wird, ist umgeben von radialen niedrigen Kapellen."
(2) T. Magnuson, Rome in the Age of Bernini, Vol. II, Stockholm 1986, p.197
(3) R. Wittkower, Palladio and Bernini, in: Palladio and Palladianismo, New York 1970, p.31
(4) E. Hubala (1), S.63: „die typischen Merkmale der 'Rotunde'"
(5) At least according to my opinion: Das Pantheon-Motiv, www.ub-uni-heidelberg.de/archiv/3119