

AP[®] ART HISTORY

2012 SCORING GUIDELINES

Question 5

The images show a plan and an exterior view of Francesco Borromini's San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane.

Identify the art-historical period during which San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane was constructed. Analyze how the formal qualities of both the plan and the exterior exemplify the style of that art-historical period. (10 minutes)

Background

This question asks students to make a correct art-historical period identification of a work of architecture. Students are then asked to analyze how the formal qualities of both the plan and the exterior of the building exemplify the style of that art-historical period. The intent of this question is to give students an opportunity to identify and explain stylistic elements that relate to a specific art-historical period.

An iconic example of Italian Baroque architecture, San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane was designed and built between 1638 and 1641 by Francesco Borromini (1599–1667). The church was the Italian architect's first independent work after assisting on projects for his uncle, Carlo Maderno, and his eventual architectural rival, Gianlorenzo Bernini. It also became one of Borromini's last works, as he returned to complete the façade nearly 30 years later, circa 1665–1667.

Commissioned by the Spanish Trinitarian Order in Rome at the behest of Cardinal Francesco Barberini, San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane is located on the southwest corner of the intersection of Strada Pia and Strada Felice. A fountain marks each of the four corners of this intersection; thus the reference to the “quattro fontane” in the church's name is a reference to its location. The church is also known by the name “San Carlino” (little Saint Charles) because of the awkwardly small plot on which it was constructed. The church is dedicated to the Trinity and to San Carlo Borromeo, the Counter-Reformation Archbishop of Milan.

The plan for San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane demonstrates Baroque aesthetic sensibility because of its innovative spatial geometry. The oblong or “pinched oval” plan deviates from the Classical geometry that is characteristic of previous High Renaissance architectural plans. The main altar is situated in direct sight line of the main entrance to the church. Two side altars form a squeezed cross-plan, while the columns and entablatures of the wall decoration offer undulating and rhythmic lines throughout the interior space. Instead of a rounded dome, Borromini stretched the church's dome to heighten the tension of the space. The interior decoration of the dome contributed to this tension by exaggerating the implied perspective of the coffers as they move toward the central lantern at its apex. Hidden windows, a characteristic feature of Baroque architectural and sculptural complexes, are fitted into the base of the dome to illuminate its interior.

Similarly, the exterior of San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane deviates from the Classical architectural vocabulary that was revived by High Renaissance architects in the period before it was built. Instead, Borromini chose distinctly curvilinear forms that contribute to the dramatic visual vocabulary of the Catholic Church during the Baroque period. Notably, Borromini's façade for San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane is distinguished by its alternating concave and convex bays, which ebb and flow in sculptural rhythm and suggest a greater continuity between exterior and interior space than High Renaissance flat façades. The undulating line of the cornice divides the lower and upper stories of the façade, whereas Corinthian columns thrust the design upwards. Deep niches feature Antonio Raggi and Sillano Sillani's sculptures of San Carlo Borromeo as well as sculptures of the founders of the Trinitarian Order, Saint John of Matha and Saint Felix of Valois, both of whom were accorded special cult status by the pope in the 1660s. The façade has deeply cut

AP[®] ART HISTORY

2012 SCORING GUIDELINES

Question 5 (continued)

recesses that emphasize light and shadow and give an overall sculptural feeling to the building. It is crowned with a large cartouche echoing the oval form. A second façade faces the corner and incorporates a preexisting fountain.

Importantly, with San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane, Borromini did not copy a Baroque style so much as create one. Both the plan and the exterior of the church were imitated in northern Italy, northern Europe, and European colonies. In this way San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane set a precedent for Baroque architecture that helped to define the style as intense and theatrical, characterized by dramatic explorations of form.

Two Tasks for Students

1. Identify the art-historical period in which San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane was constructed as Baroque.
2. Analyze the formal qualities of both the plan and the exterior in relation to the Baroque style.

Points to Remember

This is a style question. As part of a discussion of style, the question requires attribution to a specific art-historical period. The correct answer is the Baroque or the Italian Baroque. Although students may write “17th century,” “Counter-Reformation,” or “Catholic Reformation” to describe the time period when the church was constructed, the only correct answer is the specific art-historical period term “Baroque.” The highest score a response can earn if San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane is not correctly identified as Baroque or Italian Baroque is 1 point.

Students must analyze both the plan and the exterior of the church. The highest score a response can earn if only one image is discussed is 2 points.

Students may refer to the plan as the “interior” or the “design.”

AP[®] ART HISTORY

2012 SCORING GUIDELINES

Question 5 (continued)

Scoring Criteria

4 points

Response demonstrates thorough knowledge and understanding of the question.

The art-historical period is correctly identified as Baroque or Italian Baroque. The response uses specific visual evidence to analyze how the formal qualities of both the plan and the exterior exemplify the Baroque period. The response may include minor errors that do not have a meaningful impact on the analysis.

3 points

Response demonstrates sufficient knowledge and understanding of the question.

The art-historical period is correctly identified as Baroque or Italian Baroque. The response uses visual evidence to analyze how the formal qualities of both the plan and the exterior exemplify the Baroque period; however, the response may be somewhat unbalanced — focusing more on either the plan or the exterior, although both are represented — and/or may include minor errors that have some impact on the analysis.

2 points

Response demonstrates some knowledge and understanding of the question.

The art-historical period is correctly identified as Baroque or Italian Baroque. The response refers to visual evidence to discuss how formal qualities of both the plan and the exterior exemplify the Baroque period, but the discussion is less analytical than descriptive. The discussion may be overly general, simplistic, or unbalanced and may include errors that impact the response. For example, the discussion of either the plan or the exterior may be mostly accurate, whereas the discussion of the other includes errors that impact the response.

OR

The art-historical period is correctly identified as Baroque or Italian Baroque. The response uses specific visual evidence to analyze how the formal qualities of either the plan or the exterior exemplify the Baroque period; however, the response focuses entirely on one image.

NOTE: This is the highest score a response can earn if it discusses only one of the two images.

1 point

Response demonstrates little knowledge and understanding of the question.

The response correctly identifies the art-historical period as Baroque or Italian Baroque, but there is no other discussion of merit.

OR

The period is plausibly identified as Mannerism, 17th century, or Counter-Reformation, and the formal qualities of either the plan or the exterior cited as justification can reasonably be applied both to this church and to that period.

NOTE: This is the highest score a response can earn if it does not identify the art-historical period as Baroque or Italian Baroque.

0 points

Response demonstrates no discernible knowledge or understanding of the question.

The student attempts to respond, but the response makes only incorrect or irrelevant statements about San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane. The score of 0 points includes crossed-out words, personal notes, and drawings.

— This is a blank paper only.

5. The images show a plan and an exterior view of Francesco Borromini's San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane.

Identify the art-historical period during which San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane was constructed. Analyze how the formal qualities of both the plan and the exterior exemplify the style of that art-historical period. (10 minutes)

The San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane is Baroque. An important characteristic of the Baroque period is the undulating facade of the church. The curved walls and varying depths of the facade create this undulation and give it a malleable-type quality. The repetition of the oval shape is mirrored in the facade and in the floor plan and represents another quality of Baroque. In the floor plan, the oval shape constructs the church and has a stretched-out quality to it, another Baroque characteristic and exaggeration of geometric shapes. The oval pediment, a play on Classical Greek architecture, is seen being repeated in the shape of the dome. The interlocking, varying hexagons and octagons, growing smaller until they reach the center of the dome, exaggerates the space and depth the dome takes. ~~Repeat~~ Repetition of ~~the~~ curved spaces is also seen in the creation of the church walls (shown in the floor plan). The ~~walls~~ ^{ceiling of the interior} undulate back and forth just like the walls of the facade. The undulation and stretched out qualities of the church make it Baroque.

Baroque

5. The images show a plan and an exterior view of Francesco Borromini's San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane.

Identify the art-historical period during which San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane was constructed. Analyze how the formal qualities of both the plan and the exterior exemplify the style of that art-historical period. (10 minutes)

This building was made during the Baroque period. The formal qualities of the exterior exemplify the style. On the outside, the building consists of concave and convex elements with a curving facade. This emphasizes the theatricality of the art period. Also the figures within the facade that show great movement and emotion, like Bernini's David from the same time period. Also the facade has two levels of columns that create a soaring effect that ~~contrasts~~ contrasts the ~~plenty and ideal~~ calm and composed beauty of the renaissance architecture. On the interior of the building, ~~as~~ as seen on the building plan, circles are used, that create a fluid wavelike feeling. Also, the building has two facades, ~~as~~

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~~Borromini~~

Borromini's ~~to~~ San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane was built during the Baroque period. The building's floor plan follows the style by utilizing a central circular room. The layout of the building is unorthodox, but utilizes the use of columns throughout the rooms. ~~In the upper~~ on the right hand side of the floor plan is a room that uses columns in the center of the room creating an aisle. On the outside of the building, the front's undulating features and use of classical looking figures characterize the period. The columns that extend to half of the front are also important features

AP[®] ART HISTORY

2012 SCORING COMMENTARY

Question 5

Overview

This 10-minute question asked students to correctly identify the art-historical period of a work that was identified for them: Francesco Borromini's *San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane*. Students then had to analyze how the formal qualities of both the plan and the exterior of *San Carlo alle Quattro Fontane* exemplify the style of that art-historical period. The intent of the question was to give students an opportunity to identify and explain stylistic elements that relate to a specific art-historical period; in this case, the Baroque.

Sample: 5A

Score: 4

The art-historical period is correctly identified as the Baroque. The response uses specific visual evidence to analyze how the formal qualities of both the plan and the exterior exemplify the Baroque period. The response cites “the undulating façade” as an important characteristic of the Baroque period, stating that “curved walls and varying depths of the façade create this undulation and give it a malleable-type quality.” The response points out that the oval shape in both the plan and the exterior is a Baroque characteristic. The response analyzes the plan, stating that the oval shape “has a stretched out quality” that is typical of Baroque exaggeration. The response adds that “the walls of the interior undulate back and forth just like the walls of the façade.” With regard to the façade, the response refers to “the oval pediment” instead of correctly calling it a cartouche, but this is a minor error that does not have a meaningful impact on the analysis. In this way the response demonstrates thorough knowledge and understanding of the question.

Sample: 5B

Score: 3

The art-historical period is correctly identified as the Baroque. The response uses visual evidence to analyze how the formal qualities of both the plan and the exterior exemplify the Baroque period. The response addresses the exterior’s “concave and convex elements with a curving facade” and ties these attributes to “the theatricality of the art period.” The response points out that the façade has “two levels of columns that create a soaring effect that contrasts the calm and composed beauty of renaissance [*sic*]architecture.” Although the response shows how the formal qualities of the exterior exemplify the Baroque period, the discussion is somewhat unbalanced in its treatment of the plan. The short discussion of the plan errs by stating that circles (as opposed to ovals) are used yet makes the correct point that there is “a fluid wavelike feeling.” In this way the response demonstrates sufficient knowledge and understanding of the question.

Sample: 5C

Score: 2

The art-historical period is correctly identified as the Baroque. The response refers to visual evidence to discuss how formal qualities of both the plan and the exterior exemplify the Baroque period, but the discussion is less analytical than descriptive. The discussion also contains errors that impact the response. The exterior is correctly described as “undulating,” an important Baroque feature of this building. Yet the response errs in describing the plan as “a central circular room,” as opposed to the oval or stretched central plan. The response also provides only a vague description of the plan, stating that the layout is “uneven.” Nor is the discussion of interior columns specific evidence of the Baroque attribution. In this way the response demonstrates some knowledge and understanding of the question.