

# Day 15

Piazza del Popolo, Villa Borghese, and the  
Capuchin Crypt



Today was day two with Ohio University Professor Nathan Andary, and we eagerly woke up to catch the bus to meet at the Piazza del Popolo. We had to take a different bus than usual at a different stop than usual. Our typical bus did not take us in the direction of the piazza, and the stop was

closed due to construction. So, we walked down our road to find a new bus stop that would let us catch our bus. We missed the first bus by a couple minutes, and we started to panic a little but since it was



an hour long bus ride, but we waited for the next accepting the fact that we would be late by a few minutes... we were so wrong. We caught the bus and were so happy to find it empty, so we all found our seats and settled in for the long journey. At the first stop the bus made some weird noises and then proceeded to shut off, but the driver got it going again and we thought nothing of it. At the next stop a mass of people got on, but the bus died again but this time our driver did not start it again; instead he turned around and told everyone to get off. We were stranded in an unknown area already late for class, so we anxiously looked for a new bus and it was coming in ten minutes so we waited, and

then waited, and then waited even more. Class started at nine, but by the time we got on our new bus it was already nine-fifteen. We were over an hour late to class when we finally arrived, and it cut drastically into our time at the piazza, but we did manage to talk briefly about the layout of the streets. There were four streets all leading to major locations in Rome like the Vatican or the forum. It reminded me much of how Paris is laid out after Napoleon rose to power, and that is because when he visited Rome he took these ideas and used them to rebuild Paris. After discussing the Piazza we had to climb several flights of stairs and hills to reach our next stop, the Mansion of Borghese.

Villa Borghese started as a house for the Borghese family, but through time has been converted into a museum. Before entering the museum we discussed with professor Andary the relationship of the frame of the body with the frame of the space. How does a large space



react to the human body, how does the space frame the body, and what does the space say to you? We checked our bags and then entered the first floor. Our initial reaction was breathtaking, the ornament in the space was decked out from floor to



ceiling. People were flooding through the front, so we decided to start on a side room and work our way around. The first room we entered had a piece by Bernini called Apollo and Dafne. The story was that Apollo was trying to rape Dafne, a virgin, so she prayed to God to keep him away from her.

So as Apollo was reaching for Dafne she was turned into a tree. The detail in the marble was spectacular; if you looked closely at the piece you could easily differentiate the different



textures and materials Bernini portrayed. The room after held a piece well known to all of us who studied art history, it was Bernini's David. In opposition to Michelangelo's David, Bernini portrayed the biblical character in action which was very typical of the Baroque period. His body was twisting ready to release the rock at Goliath, and made you move around him and into the next room. His action and movement was so tangible. The last Bernini we saw before heading upstairs to see the Caravaggio paintings was the Rape of Persephone, and it was so powerful. Initially you look and it seems like she is being overpowered, but if you look closer you can see the muscle in her foot pressing against him and you see how

powerful she really is. A piece that initially makes you think of a tragic event somewhat turns into a piece of her power and strength to fight back. This piece spoke to so many of us. After the first floor exhibition which was primarily statues from various artists, we headed to the second floor which housed paintings from artists like Raphael and Caravaggio. These paintings were magnificent examples of Baroque paintings. The lighting was dramatic and movement was shown through a diagonal line through the painting. We all stayed up here for quite some time watching the visitors and the art.

After spending time inside the Borghese we all met up as a group outside and sketched the facade of the building for a while. I had a very interesting conversation with Vince where I found out that he is a Drake fan and his favorite Kanye album is *My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy*, which I found surprising. After sketching and discussing music our time at the Borghese was up and myself, Mitch, and Molly all went inside to meet Ahn. Now, we obviously are all here to study interior architecture, and the entrance to the lower level of this place was the perfect example of bad design. The entrance and exit are the same passageway, but is only wide enough to MAYBE fit two people. Then, when you enter, you have to go down a small two-sided stairway, which looks nice, but everything you would be headed towards is on one side of the staircase, so it ultimately just creates a bottleneck for people trying to get in and people trying to get out. Now the layout of this lower level is a wide open space with columns for support. For some reason, the museum decided to put up glass barriers between most of the columns to try to section it off into rooms, so that there would be a definite spot for the cafe, and a space to relax and drink whatever you got from the cafe, and then a back hallway

that acts as another entrance to the museum, and the bathrooms. The designers of this museum, however, neglected to designate a room for baggage claim. The baggage claim / baggage drop off is a desk at the bottom of one side of the stairs you enter through, which is also the way you would be headed anyway. This forces the huge groups of people who enter to either create a huge crowd at the bottom of the staircase, or to form a line back through a doorway in one of the glass walls leading into the next room, and in both of these cases causing it to be a huge hassle to get in or out of the museum. After having to navigate through all the results of this terrible design of the lower level, we finally were able to collect everyone's bags and get out of there. The Borghese was a great experience and had some of the most beautiful sculptures I had ever seen, but by god was it a lesson either A) to designers to learn how people move through a space or B) to clients to make sure they tell their designers that bags are not allowed in the museum so huge groups of people will be checking in and taking out bags at a scheduled time every day.

After leaving the Borghese we began to walk further into the nearby neighborhood to grab our lunch for the day. We all were very hungry and decided on going to a perfect example of incredible italian cuisine, a nice local mom and pop restaurant that would really give us the perfect idea of what being a normal Italian going to lunch would be like. SYKE we actually went to none other than The Hard Rock Cafe. It was 100% worth it, and after personally filling up on chicken tenders, french fries, a chocolate milkshake, and enjoying the antics of our clever italian waiter, we were satisfied. We payed for our meals and moved on the next stop on our journey, The Capuchin Crypt.

The Capuchin Crypt is a monastery ran by the Capuchin Monks. It is underneath a church that they use today and is a museum that tells the history of the Capuchin Monks, the Capuchin Crypt itself, and some of the famous monks that are linked to it in various ways. The crypt is seven small chapels that are ornamented entirely with bones of monks that have died. The current estimate is that the bones are from around 3,700 dead Capuchin friars. They used different sets of bones from the bodies, and sometimes whole skeletons, to ornament the chapel. I found it really creepy and unsettling seeing seven entire chapels that are decorated with REAL pelvises, spines, skulls, and various other bones, but other people in the group thought it was a really cool experience. The guest instructor, Nathan, was especially moved by it.

That wrapped up all of our learning experience for the day, so we all left the crypt and moved on to do different things before going home. Paula, Jake, and Molly went to go find a candy store, Sheridan, Citlali and I went back towards the piazza we visited yesterday to do some shopping around there, and Mitch and Allie went home for the day. Later on that night we all linked up at one of the apartments and played some euchre before going to bed, which seems to be becoming an obsession in our group this trip. It was a very cool day.

Stay tuned to see how our final days here in Rome go.