
*(From the Introduction)*

This book appears during the quincentennial of the death of Donato Bramante (1444-1514), who was recognized in his own time and still today for recovering the principles of Classical architecture that define the Renaissance. With only slight exaggeration it could be said that Bramante changed the history of western art, influencing everything that came after and informing our vision of antiquity itself. By common consent, the first fully articulated expression of his achievement is found in the Tempietto, the memorial chapel honoring Saint Peter on the site of his martyrdom in Rome. When Bramante built the Tempietto at the beginning of the sixteenth century, he was a master artist with an impressive record of achievement in Milan where he served the duke as architect and engineer. In Rome he generated projects both subtle in concept and prodigious in scale for that most ambitious Renaissance Maecenas, Pope Julius II, and in prime position New Saint Peter’s basilica, enduring symbol of the papacy and of the Roman Church. Saint Peter’s, like the other projects Bramante initiated for the pope, was completed long after his death by those who defined his legacy for the later sixteenth century and after. The Tempietto is among the few surviving works that Bramante conceived during his first years in the Eternal City and saw through to completion.

The Tempietto is also one of those special monuments in the history of art that exerts an immediate and lasting impression on all who come into its presence, nestled in the first cloister of the Franciscan monastery of San Pietro in Montorio located high on the Janiculum hill overlooking the city. Bramante’s artistic heirs, Sebastiano Serlio, Giorgio Vasari, and Andrea Palladio, famously praised the Tempietto, but a well-informed visitor in the 1540s best expressed its compelling presence, remarking on its centralized plan, construction material, columnar system, and degree of refinement both outside and within, ending “it is truly a joy,” *et veramente una gioia*. And so it was for me during an extended period of residence in Rome, at times with students alongside, when I enjoyed the privilege of sustained exposure to this pivotal monument in the Western architectural tradition. The first time I entered the crypt of the Tempietto and made out the names of Ferdinand and Isabel, Catholic King and Queen, inscribed on the 1502 foundation stone, I suspected that the relationship of those illustrious monarchs to this most lauded Renaissance building held rich possibilities for defining the historical underpinnings of Bramante’s architecture.

During the five centuries of its existence, the Tempietto has attracted widespread admiration and detailed examination, but its status as the premier commission of the Spanish monarchs in Rome has received scant attention. The incomplete documentary record may have contributed to this neglect, but equally relevant is the unfamiliar circumstance that foreign sovereigns sponsored one of the canonical works of the Italian Renaissance. The goal of the present study is to recover the conceptual foundations of Bramante's architecture by situating the Tempietto at the center of a campaign of Spanish celebration in Rome. Bramante's innovations emerge as inseparable from the historical realities of patronage and politics, and Spain's contributions to shaping this cornerstone of Renaissance art come into sharp focus.