

Sixteenth-Century Italian Architecture

by Sophia



WHAT'S COVERED

Sixteenth-century architecture was built by extraordinary architects, including Bramante, Michelangelo, and Palladio. This lesson covers:



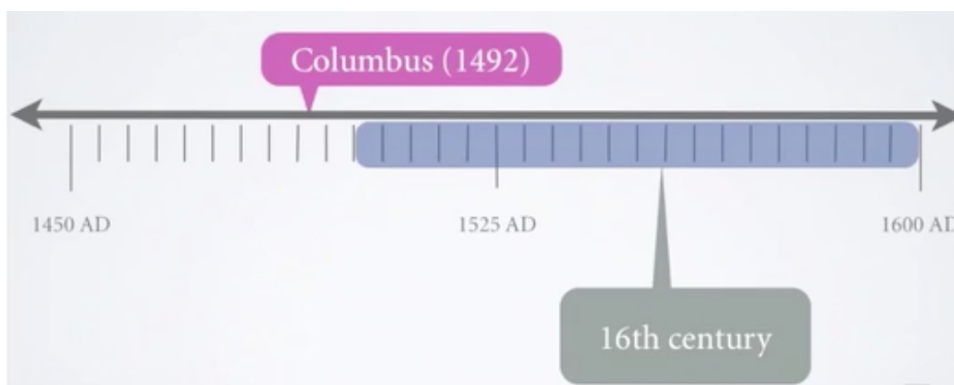
BIG IDEA

The architects Bramante, Michelangelo, and Palladio designed some of the finest examples of 16th century Renaissance architecture in Italy.

1. Period and Location: Sixteenth-Century Architecture

This lesson focuses on the architecture of the 16th century in the cities of Rome and Vicenza in Italy.

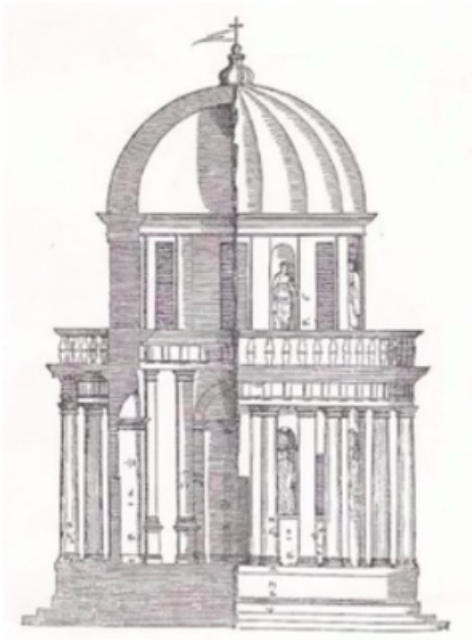
Below is a timeline of the period covered by this lesson. Note that the excursion of Columbus in 1492 is also highlighted as a reference point.



2. Bramante and the Tempietto

The architect and artist Donato Bramante was a very well-known and respected artist of his time. He is one of the preeminent architects of the Renaissance, contributing such notable designs as his work on St. Peter's Basilica and the Tempietto, or Little Temple, in the courtyard of San Pietro in Montorio in Rome.

➔ **EXAMPLE** Below is an image of the Tempietto.



Tempietto (Little Temple) by Bramante

1502

Stone, Marble

Rome, Italy

The Tempietto marks the supposed location of St. Peter's martyrdom. As the name suggests, it's a small building, almost functioning more as an example of sculpture than architecture. It's inspired by the design of smaller, circular Greek shrines and round Roman temples. This piece of architecture incorporates the elements seen in larger monumental structures of the time. However, this is done in a condensed version that still manages to be fresh and original.

Although classically inspired, the execution is stylistically Renaissance. This is evident in the combination of well-proportioned architectural elements that wouldn't have been seen in antiquity, such as the drum and balustrade combination.

➞ **EXAMPLE** Here is a closeup of the colonnade:



Colonnade at Tempietto

3. St. Peter's Design

Bramante's talent landed him the opportunity to design the replacement for the older basilica-style church of St. Peter's in Rome.

➤ EXAMPLE Below is an image of these plans.



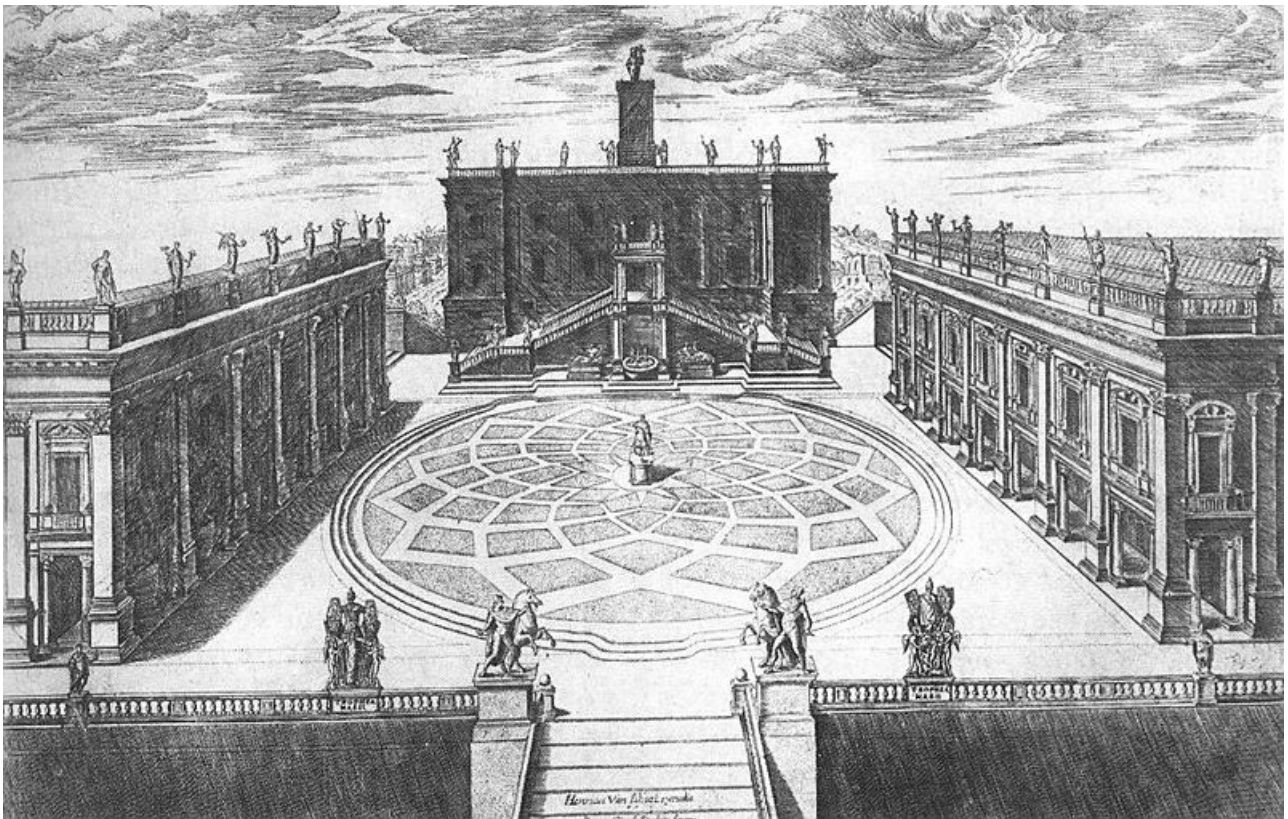
Plans for St. Peter's by Bramante & Michelangelo

1505-1506 (Bramante); c. 1546 (Michelangelo)

Bramante's original design was for a **central plan church**, like a Greek cross, with a hemispherical dome. Upon Bramante's death, the architectural responsibilities were passed to Michelangelo.

Michelangelo had firmly established his reputation as a master architect earlier, completely redesigning the Piazza Del Campidoglio, also known as Capitoline Hill, beginning in 1536.

➔ **EXAMPLE** His design is shown here:



Redesign for Capitoline Hill by Michelangelo

1568

Rome, Italy

Michelangelo reworked the piazza to face toward St. Peter's rather than the previous direction facing the ruins of the Roman forum.



St. Peter's Basilica by Bramante and Michelangelo

1506

Rome, Italy

Michelangelo was so impressed with Bramante's work that he decided to expand upon Bramante's original designs for St. Peter's. Michelangelo maintained the central plan style with some adjustments. Most notably, he changed the overall design of the dome from hemispherical to ogival, like the magnificent dome of the Florence Cathedral.



TERM TO KNOW

Central Plan Church

Basic church architecture that designs a central space that is surrounded by smaller symmetrical areas.

4. Palladio and the Villa “La Rotonda”

In the Venetian Republic, near Vicenza, the artist Andrea Palladio was busy building a major career as an artist that would eventually spread his influence outside of Italy to areas as far away as England and the United States. He was well-known for his work on villas.

➞ **EXAMPLE** His most famous villa, “La Rotonda,” stands as one of his most influential designs.



Villa Rotunda by Andrea Palladio

1567 (construction began)

Vicenza, Italy

It was built on a hilltop with a central plan design that featured four porches inspired by Roman temple porticos, such as that of the Pantheon. Each had a different view of the surrounding countryside.



DID YOU KNOW

The influence of the Pantheon is very apparent in the design of this villa. From every entrance, the building strongly resembles the overall look of the older structure. However, while the influence was there, it is by no means a copy of the Pantheon.



Pantheon

113–125

Rome, Italy

Palladio's dome, for example, complements the overall design rather than dominating it, and is topped with a heavy lantern, a la Florence Cathedral and St. Peter's Basilica, versus the open oculus of the Pantheon. The design is considered one of the finest examples of Renaissance architecture, and inspired countless designs that followed, including Thomas Jefferson's plantation at Monticello in Virginia.



SUMMARY

Bramante, Michelangelo, and Palladio were well-known sixteenth-century architects. In this lesson, you learned about the **period and location of sixteenth-century architecture**.

You explored **Bramante and the Tempietto**. Bramante is one of the preeminent architects of the Renaissance, contributing such notable designs as his work on St. Peter's Basilica, which Michelangelo admired so much he based his completion of the design on it, and the Tempietto, or Little Temple. Bramante's talent also landed him the opportunity to take part in **St. Peter's design** in Rome. Finally, you explored **Palladio and the villa "La Rotonda,"** one of his most influential designs.

Source: THIS WORK IS ADAPTED FROM SOPHIA AUTHOR IAN MCCONNELL.



TERMS TO KNOW

Central Plan Church

Basic church architecture that designs a central space that is surrounded by smaller symmetrical areas.