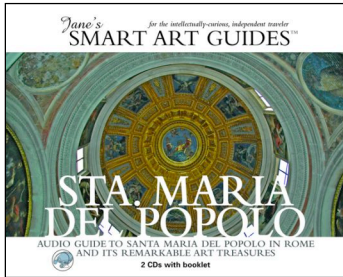


For Immediate Release

Media kits, product review samples, and interviews available on request. High-resolution images available in jpegs via email. In depth feature story articles on specific European art locations available upon request.

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Audio art guide winner of Best Books 2006 Award



Jane's Smart Art Guide to Sta. Maria del Popolo in Rome just received the Best Books 2006 National Book Award in the Audiobook: Travel Guides category.

Jane's Smart Art Guide to Sta. Maria del Popolo in Rome will immerse you in the illuminating historical context of the art, politics, culture and religion that have intertwined over centuries to create the unique character of this remarkable church. Jane offers insights for art-lovers and history buffs who want more than just the highlights about what they're seeing.



This church is an extraordinary - often overlooked - art site. Hidden behind its unassuming façade is a trove of celebrated art treasures, unique architectural features and layers of history. Sta. Maria del Popolo is virtually bursting with noteworthy architecture and art ... from the 700-year-old icon adorning the altar ... to the first dome of the Roman Renaissance ... to the last Baroque tomb!



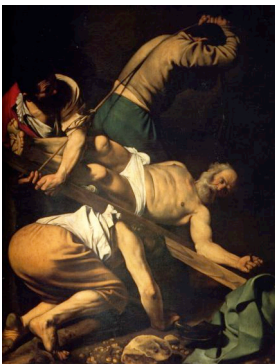
The Jane's Smart Art Audio Guide to Sta. Maria del Popolo tells of the central role this delight-filled church has played in Rome's history ... by virtue of its location just inside the city's principle north gate. You'll learn about some of the historically-prominent men who have figured in it's history and about the art they commissioned to decorate their chapels.

For example, in 1511 - the same year Pope Julius was ignoring Michelangelo's pleas for at least partial payment for his work on the Sistine Chapel ceiling - a young German monk arrived in Rome, and lodged at Sta. Maria del Popolo. Entering the city through the north gate, he dropped to his knees, kissed the ground, and cried, "Blessed art thou, holy Rome!" It was Martin Luther. His joy was short-lived. He soon came to loathe everything about the place - even the vigorous gesturing that accompanied Italian conversation! Six years later,

back home in Wittenburg, he posted the 95 theses that started the ball rolling towards the Protestant Reformation.



In 1231, Pope Gregory IX installed a 12thC icon above the altar in the church. The same painting is still there today, but on a “new” altar, designed by Bernini 400 years later. Since then, dozens of others -- popes and cardinals and prominent citizens - have sponsored restorations and decorations. In addition to many unique architectural features, there is a chapel with two Caravaggio paintings, and another with two sculptures by Bernini. There are 15thC frescoes by Pinturicchio and important work by Bregno, Bramante, Raphael, Sansovino, Algardi and others.



Jane's Smart Art Guides are for inquisitive travelers who want more than just the highlights about what they're seeing. Sure, you know that's the *Martyrdom of St Peter* by Caravaggio, but what was it that made this painting so unique ... and so controversial ... in the early 17thC? You recognize his use of “chiaroscuro” - sharp light and deep shadow - but did you know that he may have adopted it as a tool to mask a lack of technical skill? Although commissions of this kind were almost always done directly on the wall, Caravaggio painted on canvas because he found fresco technique too demanding.



Among the tombs are those of more than a dozen cardinals. Some are visual delights, designed to keep us humble by reminding us of the transience of life. Before the Baroque period, traditional emblems of mortality in art had been a skull, hourglass or candle. But as a result of advances in knowledge about anatomy, the depiction of full skeletons became common.



The most macabre tomb at Sta. Maria del Popolo was created in 1672 by a Polish architect, G.B. Gisleni, for his own memorial. It's a skeletal bust, draped with a shroud, gazing piously out of its crypt. Looking morbidly real, it's carved from marble, and bears the inscription, “Neither alive in this world nor dead in the next” ... just to be sure we don't miss the point!

Each *Jane's Smart Art Guide* title includes a “Slice of History” segment to be listened to in advance, in addition to the on-site tour. A companion booklet provides track lists, floor plans, glossary, and tips to tailor the tour to individual interests and schedule.



Unlike audio walking tours, *Jane's Smart Art Guides* are site-specific. Created and narrated by **Jane McIntosh**, an experienced tour-guide, art expert and history buff, the guides penetrate deep into the essence of a single place, to the delight of travelers who like to know the encompassing context of what they're seeing.

The consistently high quality of these engaging audio guides allows you to experience the richness of history and the character of a place like never before. Each guide conveys an extraordinary wealth and variety of information. It's like having a knowledgeable, stimulating travel companion, or like having your own top-notch private tour guide.

The only equipment required is a portable audio player (CD, iPod or MP3) and earphones. Two people can share a player, using an "audio splitter" available at any electronics store, or from www.janessmartart.com.

The guides are available on CD or downloadable MP3, priced from \$13.95 to \$24.95, depending on format and tour length.

The *Audio Guide to Rome's St. Peter's Basilica* won the Communicators Awards' highest distinction for audio, the 2005 Award of Excellence, and was named an IPPY Awards 2006 semi-finalist in the travel guides category. The series also includes a guide to the beautifully-restored gothic **Cathedral of Our Lady in Antwerp**. Guides to **Fra Angelico at San Marco, Florence** and **Raphael's Stanza della Segnatura at the Vatican** will be released early in 2007.

What People Are Saying

"I was really impressed by the ingenuity and the content of your guide to Santa Maria del Popolo. ... an elegant and eloquent guide to a fascinating building."

Caroline P. Murphy, Author, *The Pope's Daughter*

"Your guide to Sta. Maria del Popolo is fantastic. I have read everything I could find (in English) about this church, and I learned so much more during your tour. The information is easy to follow and tourist friendly. ... such a wonderful resource. Your art guides will be highly recommended!"

Carol Stigger, Travel Journalist

More information is available at www.JanesSmartArt.com

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Jane's for the intellectually-curious, independent traveler
SMART ART GUIDES™