

Before Brunelleschi: the Dome of the Florentine Baptistery of San Giovanni

Piero Degl'Innocenti

Abstract Inside the famous Baptistery of San Giovanni in Florence stands a very interesting dome, though not well known in its structural aspects and furthermore for the date of its realisation. In effects, even if the monument resembles many great classical or early Christian examples, nowadays it is generally dated as medieval since it rises upon roman archaeological ruins. This enigma was recently resolved, and the monument with its dome - very original both for the building aspects, that captured Brunelleschi's attention, and for the symbols connected with its form - can now be correctly related to the late antiquity, finally revealing itself not as a baptistery, but as an imperial Roman memorial building and the true trait-d'union between the Pantheon and Hagia Sophia.

Keywords Roman domes, Florence Baptistery, symbolic architecture, buttresses structure