



PALAZZO VECCHIO

The emblematic monument of the City, Palazzo Vecchio has been the seat of its government for over seven centuries. The landmark contains extraordinary traces of the most important phases of Florence's history and its art, from the ruins of the Roman-era theatre preserved below ground to the lavishly decorated monumental rooms embellished by famous artists of the 15th and 16th centuries. Visitors can also enjoy spectacular panoramic views from the Battlements and Tower.

The masterpieces preserved in the Palazzo include Donatello's *Judith*, Bronzino's paintings in the Chapel of Eleonora of Toledo, and Michelangelo's *Genius of Victory*.

Accessing the Museum

The Museum can be accessed through the main entrance on Piazza della Signoria or through the side entrance on Via dei Gondi.

Useful information

Archaeological tour: excavations of the Roman Theatre of Florence. In the wake of the emergency caused by the pandemic, the archaeological tour is temporarily closed to the public.

Tower and Battlements: Entry is prohibited to children under seven years of age and is not recommended for those with impaired mobility, cardiovascular problems and asthma, or for those who suffer from dizziness and claustrophobia. Visitors under the age of 18 must be accompanied by an adult. In case of rain, the Tower will be closed, such that the visit will conclude at the Battlements.

Accessibility for visitors with impaired mobility:

Use the side entrance on Via dei Gondi. The Museum is accessible with the exception of the Mezzanine, the Battlements, the Tower and several rooms where

educational activities are held. The Salone dei Cinquecento and other areas can be reached by the lift (entrance door 75 cm wide) or by other routes (ask staff members). The Museum has two wheelchairs which it will make available to visitors free of charge (inquire at the Cloakroom next to the Ticket Office). The Archaeological Tour is partially accessible (with an accompanying person).

Services

Ticket Office

The Ticket Office can be accessed from the Customs Courtyard (*Cortile della Dogana*). It sells single and multiple tickets, subscriptions to the Musei Civici, and the Firenze Card.

Purchase tickets online

Info Point

The Info Point is on the ground floor in the Customs Courtyard, inside the Ticket Office. Information service and reservations for guided tours and educational activities. Multimedia guides for hire in Italian, English, French, German, Russian and Spanish.

Bookshop

The Bookshop is located on the ground floor in the Customs Courtyard next to the Ticket Office. The shop sells art publications and catalogues, guides to the City and its museums in a variety of languages, educational books and games for children, and a vast array of objects and gadgets inspired by Palazzo Vecchio and the artworks of Florence.

Cafeteria

The Cafeteria is located on the ground floor in the Customs Courtyard, next to the Ticket Office.

Cloakroom

The Cloakroom is located on the ground floor in the Customs Courtyard, near the Ticket Office. Visitors are requested to check umbrellas, day packs and large bags (service is free of charge).

Students must check their backpacks. Wheelchairs and prams for hire free of charge.

Lift

The lift can be accessed on the ground floor in the Customs Courtyard. It is reserved for visitors with impaired mobility.

Multimedia Area

The Multimedia Area is on the second floor of the Museum tour, at the exit of the Hall of Lilies.

Contact information

For problems regarding online ticket purchases, write to: supportoutenti@silfi.it. The office will respond within two hours during business hours (Mon. - Fri., 9:00 am - 5:00 pm).

For information on the Musei Civici Fiorentini: musei.civici@comune.fi.it

For information and reservations for guided tours and educational activities:

Associazione MUS.E

For adults and families

+39 055-276 8224 - +39 055-276 8558

(Mon. - Sat.: 9.30 am - 1:00 pm / 2:00 pm - 5:00 pm;

Sun. and holidays: 9:30 am - 12:30 pm)

info@musefirenze.it

For schools

Mon. - Fri.: 9.30 am - 1:00 pm / 2:00 pm - 4:30 pm

+39 055 2616788

didattica@musefirenze.it

VISITING THE MUSEUM

Underground

Archaeological Tour: Ruins of the Roman Theatre of Florence

The foundations of Palazzo Vecchio rest on the great theatre of the Roman city of *Florentia*, built in the 1st century BC and expanded between the 1st and 2nd centuries AD. With the aid of multimedia devices, visitors can view portions of the ancient theatre and the later layers of roads and mediaeval buildings that excavations have brought to light.

Ground Floor

Traces of Florence

Through a display of images, this section presents a brief account of the history of Florence. A selection of important artworks from the City's collections document

its identity and urban development, from the Early Renaissance to modern times.

Monumental Apartments

First Floor

Occupying much of this floor, the Salone dei Cinquecento is the most emblematic space of Palazzo Vecchio. It was built at the end of the 15th century to host the Grand Council in the context of an expansion of Florence's legislative assembly. During the rule of Cosimo I de' Medici, the Salone became one of the most lavish reception halls of the Late Renaissance; today it is still the preferred site for ceremonies in the City.

The same floor also hosts the Studiolo of Francesco I, which by contrast was a very private space, a treasure chest of wonders accessible only to the grand duke and his most intimate guests. The Quarters of Leo X occupy the opposite side; they are only partially accessible to visitors, given that they have served as the offices of the Mayor of Florence since 1871.

Mezzanine

Located along the stairs that connect the Apartments of the Priors to the ground floor, this is the space that most

retains the appearance and atmosphere of the mediaeval structure. Since 1934 it has hosted a collection of priceless works of mediaeval and Renaissance art, which were donated to the Municipality of Florence by the American collector Charles Loeser. These rooms give an idea of the typical furnishings of the City's historic noble residences.

Second Floor

This floor hosts most of the monumental apartments of Palazzo Vecchio. The Apartments of the Elements form part of the section built in the second half of the 16th century to accommodate guests and the governing functions of the Grand Duchy.

The original core of the building is situated on the other side of this floor. It was built in the 14th century as the seat of Florence's government, which consisted of the Priors of the Guilds and the Gonfaloniere of Justice. These officials had their private residences and common rooms here, which were later partially transformed into the Apartments of Duchess Eleonora of Toledo, wife of Cosimo I de' Medici.

Tower and Battlements

The crenellated Battlements run along the perimeter of the oldest part of the building; the elegant, overhanging Tower, meanwhile, reaches a height of 95 metres: both structures served to protect the members of the Florentine government who resided here from external attacks. They further symbolised their supremacy over the City's nobility. The tour includes access to these historic lookouts, which provide spectacular views of the City and its surroundings.

Ground Floor and Underground



Beneath Palazzo Vecchio: excavations of the Roman Theatre of Florence

Archaeological excavations in the underground spaces of Palazzo Vecchio terminated in 2010, bringing to light ruins of several parts of the Roman Theatre of *Florentia*. The project was conducted by the *Cooperativa Archeologia* under the scientific direction of the *Soprintendenza per i Beni Archeologici* of Tuscany, while processing of the findings and study of the materials, which are still underway, were entrusted to the team of Professor Riccardo Francovich of the University of Siena.

History of the Roman Theatre

The foundations of Palazzo Vecchio rest on a site of extraordinary historical importance: the ruins of the ancient Roman Theatre of *Florentia*. The first structures of the Theatre may date as far back as the foundation of the Roman colony itself. The Theatre was probably expanded during the rebuilding of the City in the Imperial era (late 1st to early 2nd century AD).

From what we can tell from the archaeological ruins, the Theatre of *Florentia* must have had quite a large capacity, estimated to hold between 8,000 and 10,000 spectators. Its 'footprint' indeed extended over a vast portion of ground under Palazzo Vecchio and Palazzo Gondi, with the *cavea*, or tiered seating, facing Piazza della Signoria and the performance area running along Via dei Leoni. The Theatre's size and capacity attest to the city's demographic increase during the Imperial era, the period in which *Florentia* saw significant urban development.

The Theatre was used until the 5th century AD. In the wake of the crisis of the Roman Empire and the Byzantine-Gothic wars, it gradually fell into disuse and decay. The area was repeatedly sacked, its decorative and building materials carried away.

From the Lombard era the *burelle* – the radial stone corridors which supported the semicircular tiered seating

– were used for a variety of functions: some of these spaces served as dumps, lime pits, burial places or animal stalls. The highest parts of the seating area were fortified and used as a guard tower, called the 'Guardingo'. Several *burrelle* became prisons around the 12th or 13th century.

In this same period, the Foraboschi and Manieri families raised their turreted houses on the site of the Roman Theatre. Later, these were absorbed into the expansion of Palazzo dei Priori (today's Palazzo Vecchio), which was constructed at the end of the 13th century from a design traditionally attributed to Arnolfo di Cambio.

Past excavation campaigns and the drawings of Corinto Corinti

The construction and expansion of the Palazzo definitively concealed the ruins of the Roman Theatre. Memory of its existence, still fresh in the minds of late mediaeval Florentines, gradually died out.

The ruins of Roman *Florentia* began to reemerge in the second half of the 19th century, when the capital of the Kingdom of Italy was transferred to Florence (1865). An intensive series of projects was undertaken during those years to demolish and modernise the urban fabric.

The Municipality of Florence entrusted the architect Corinto Corinti (1843-1930) with the task of graphically documenting the discoveries made during the reconstruction efforts. Thanks to his drawings, today we have information about the precious archaeological finds from Florence's underground spaces, most of which had by then been hidden by new structures. This is the case of the Mercato Vecchio (today's Piazza della Repubblica), which was completely destroyed to carry out part of the urban renovation: excavations here revealed the remains of the Forum with the *Capitolium* of the Roman city.

In 1875-76, during the reconstruction of a sewer system in Via de' Gondi, several portions of the *burelle* of the Roman Theatre were accidentally found. In light of the radial arrangement of these underground corridors and in accordance with the measurements and initial hypotheses made by engineer Frascchetti, Corinti proposed a drawing of the Theatre, surmising that its ruins extended under Palazzo Vecchio as well.

Results of the recent excavation

Between November 1997 and May 1998, experts performed a preliminary archaeological investigation that involved the seven rooms located off the third courtyard of Palazzo Vecchio. The actual excavation campaign took place from 2004 to 2010, focusing on five of these spaces.

This work brought to light several sections of the *burelle*, including the *vomitorium*, the central corridor which provided spectators access to the Theatre. The inner edge of the platform of the orchestra also became visible, which in the Roman theatre did not host the chorus like its Greek counterpart but was reserved for the authorities. The discovery of a group of amphorae for foods, which had been broken and reused for drainage, allowed researchers to date the construction of the *burelle* to the between the late 1st and early 2nd century AD. Nonetheless, it is likely that the Theatre's original nucleus dates to the foundation of the Roman colony – the late 1st century BC – and that it was subsequently expanded.

Successive layers of construction covered the Imperial-era remains, in particular works dating to the mediaeval period (12th-14th centuries), such as wells and the foundations of residences and other buildings. Archaeologists in fact discovered a street front with

mediaeval doors and cobblestones, which was incorporated into the 16th-century enlargement of Palazzo della Signoria toward Via dei Gondi and Via de' Leoni.

Traces of Florence: Palazzo Vecchio narrates the City's history

Traces of Florence is a display section that offers visitors a suggestive overview of the City in its most emblematic historical building.

Here Florence is shown through a series of evocative images and a selection of important works with vistas and glimpses of the City, inviting visitors to discover its history and beauty.

The story of Florence as an *urbs* – an urban configuration – and as a *civitas* – a political, social and cultural identity – is perhaps best told in the context of the monument which symbolises the City. The architectural layers of Palazzo Vecchio are ideal narrators of this history, from the ruins of the Theatre of Roman *Florentia* preserved in its foundations, to the mediaeval Palazzo dei Priori and the splendours of the Medicean era, to the memory of the years in which Florence was capital of the Kingdom of Italy.

The new exhibition, which has its origins in the collections of a former museum, the Museo Storico Topografico 'Firenze com'era', is hosted in two rooms of the ground floor of the Palazzo; it consists of a permanent display and a temporary section.

The permanent portion of the exhibition provides an overview of the City's urban development by means of a selection of paintings, engravings and drawings that document Florence's appearance over the centuries, from the Early Renaissance (15th century) to recent times (20th century).

The itinerary begins with two emblems of Florentine iconography, a 19th-century reproduction of the *Pianta della Catena*, the well-known 15th-century view of Florence, and the map drawn by Stefano Bonsignori. These are followed by several famous engravings by Giuseppe Zocchi, which show 18th-century Florence and its vibrant and diverse social life, as well as a series of delightful views of the Arno River and the City by such acclaimed painters as Livio Mehus, Thomas Patch, Emilio Burci and Giovanni Signorini.

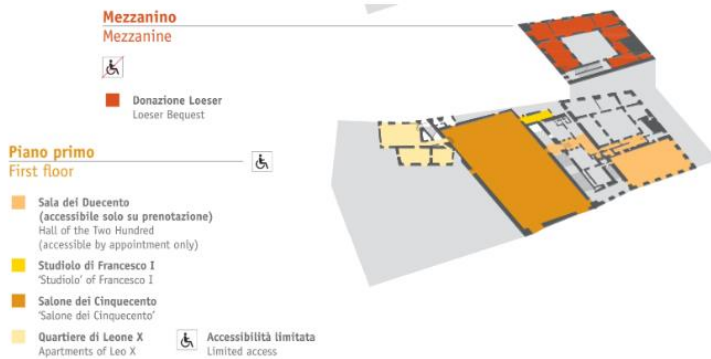
The old city centre is called back to memory by a set of small panels by Augusto Marrani. These depict characteristic alleyways which disappeared in the wake of the great urban transformations of the 19th century.

This far-reaching process of renewal is in fact documented by the drawings for one of the projects by Giuseppe Poggi for Florence when it became capital of the Kingdom of Italy.

Luigi Zumkeller's 1936 drawing *Panoramic View of Florence* provides insight into the expansions of the modern city. The permanent section concludes with images of the most painful moments of Florence's recent history, namely the wartime destruction of 1944 and the flood of 1966.

The temporary portion of the exhibition hosts small displays focusing on particular aspects of the City's history, drawing mostly on the objects from the collections and storerooms of the Musei Civici Fiorentini. These events have the dual intention of offering new means of spurring reflection on Florence's past and present and of giving visitors the opportunity of viewing collections or single works that are little known or which have not been exhibited before.

First Floor and Mezzanine



Sala dei Duecento

Located in the original nucleus of Palazzo Vecchio, which dates to the first years of the 14th century, the Sala dei Duecento ('Hall of the Two Hundred') was built to host the sessions of the Florentine Council. It was originally called the 'Sala del Popolo' or the 'Sala del Comune'; it took its current name in the 16th century, when Duke Alessandro de' Medici reformed the Council, expanding the body to 200 members.

In the past, access to the Sala dei Duecento was gained by a stairway from the first courtyard. The hall contained a separate, 'secret' recess for voting, a podium for the Signoria and magistrates, and an altar.

In the 1470s, Giuliano da Maiano and his collaborators created the monumental wooden coffered ceiling, with rose ornamentations encircled by Angevin fleurs-de-lis, as well as the frieze embellished with garlands and shields bearing the City's traditional insignia. During this period, the same famous workshop of woodworkers and sculptors also realised the gilded and painted ceilings of the Hall of Lilies and the Audience Chamber on the floor above.

During the final two republican periods of Florence's history (1494-1512 and 1527-30), the Council was saw further expansions, necessitating an even larger space to accommodate its members: the Salone dei Cinquecento was thus built. The 'old hall', meanwhile, now hosted the sessions of the Senate of Eighty.

The original function of the Sala dei Duecento was briefly revived by Duke Alessandro de' Medici (1532-1537). Yet under his successor Cosimo I (1537-1574), who assumed most of the decisional prerogatives of the Council, the hall was increasingly used for diplomatic receptions and celebrations of Medicean power. The changed purpose

of the space is indicated by the installation of the tapestry cycle depicting the *Stories of Joseph*, which Cosimo commissioned to lavishly decorate the hall.

In this period there were probably only two entrances into the Sala dei Duecento, one through the shorter wall – between the doors used today – and the other corresponding to today's second door in the long wall. This is indicated by the 'cutouts' in two of the tapestries to allow access through those entrances.

With the exception of a brief period in 1848, when the Senate of Tuscany met here, the hall would only recover its role as the centre of the City's political life when Palazzo Vecchio was granted to the Municipality. Indeed, in 1872 the room regained its historical function as the venue for meetings of the Florentine Council; it continues to serve that purpose today.

Salone dei Cinquecento

The current appearance of the Salone dei Cinquecento ('Hall of the Five Hundred') reflects its status as one of the most emblematic spaces of the late Florentine Renaissance and attests to the magnificence of the Medicean court.

The hall came into being at the end of the 15th century, when Palazzo Vecchio was the seat of the Signoria of Florence. At the behest of Girolamo Savonarola, Simone Pollaiuolo, called Cronaca, built the space to accommodate the legislative assembly of the new popular political order that was proclaimed after the Medici were expelled from the City. The new governing Council was made up of over 1,000 citizens, who met on a rotating basis. The appearance of the original Hall of the Great Council was quite different from its current one: the ceiling was roughly seven metres lower, and there were windows on all sides.

At the beginning of the 16th century, Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo Buonarroti were commissioned to paint two glorious episodes of Florence's military history, the Battle of Anghiari (1440) the Battle of Cascina (1364), respectively; yet neither artist was able to complete his assignment.

The sumptuous appearance boasted by the hall today was achieved thanks to the great works of art executed after 1540, when Duke Cosimo I de' Medici decided to move his residence to Palazzo Vecchio: the old, austere seat of Florentine Signoria had to adapt to its new role of princely residence. With the arrival of the court, the vast hall lost its original function, becoming now a venue for

receiving ambassadors and subjects and a vehicle for reflecting the Duke's absolute power.

All the ornamental elements of the hall in fact rival each other to exalt the glory of the Medicean family and Cosimo I in particular. The decorative programme was carried out according to a unified plan, beginning with the sculptures of the north side, where the raised podium, called the Udienza, is located, and culminating in the central panel of the ceiling.

Udienza

The new arrangement of the north side (to the left of the main entrance) was begun by Baccio Bandinelli and Giuliano di Baccio d'Agnolo shortly after the Palazzo became the Ducal residence. The work was only terminated in the last decade of the 16th century, during the reign of Ferdinando I.

The sculptures along the walls of the Udienza were made at different times by Baccio Bandinelli, Vincenzo de' Rossi and Giovanni Caccini. They pay tribute to the Medicean genealogy, with representations of some of the family's greatest members: in the minor niches, from right to left, we find the sculpture of Cosimo I himself, followed by those of his father Giovanni delle Bande Nere, his

predecessor Alessandro de' Medici, and his son Francesco I; the broader niches host those of Pope Leo X in the centre and of Clement VII crowning Empire Charles V on the right.

Walls

The paintings which decorated the hall were executed later, beginning in the first half of the 1560s. Vincenzo Borghini was entrusted with the iconographic programme, under the direction of Giorgio Vasari, the famous painter, architect and biographer from Arezzo. Vasari was indeed responsible for most of the extraordinary work of restructuring and embellishing the Palazzo ordered by Cosimo I.

Several painters took part in the wall decorations, including Giovan Battista Naldini and Giovanni Stradano. Executed between 1567 and 1571, the frescoes represent episodes of two important wars in Florence's history.

The fresco on the west wall depicts the war against Pisa, which Florence fought during the era of popular rule and which lasted 14 years, from 1495 to 1508. The republican government that led the war effort was the same one which gave this hall its original layout. The narration of

the main episodes of this long war continues in the panels of the coffers on the left portion of the ceiling, with the *Triumph of Florence* in the centre and Antonio Giacomini's *Oration* in the octagon by the Udienna. The latter work provides rare evidence of the former appearance of the Sala dei Duecento, the Palazzo's other important meeting room.

Against the wall – at the level of the central ceiling panel commemorating the victory of the City's militias – stands the final rammed-earth model of Giambologna's marble group representing Florence victorious over Pisa, held today at the Museo Nazionale del Bargello.

Parallel to these scenes of the defeat of Pisa, the opposite wall and the adjacent ceiling panels depict several episodes of the war against Siena, including the suggestive night scene of the *Capture of the Fort near Porta Camollia*, which initiated the siege against the rival city. Fought between 1553 and 1554, the war was conducted by Duke Cosimo de' Medici himself, who led the Florentine army to victory in only 14 months, compared to the 14 years needed by the Republic to overcome the city of Pisa. The juxtaposition of the two wars aims to highlight the efficiency of Cosimo I's absolute power and personal abilities with respect to the Republican government's low level of competence. The

painting on the ceiling in fact shows the duke meditating on the conquest of Siena in isolation, with the support of Virtue, in contrast to the crowded debate in Antonio Giacomini's *Oration*.

In the centre of this side – at the level of the ceiling painting of the *Triumph of Florence* – we find the sculpture group meant to symbolise the submission of the enemy city. In this case, the sculpture took on this meaning only later, when Vasari proposed moving it to the hall: the work is in fact the famous *Genius of Victory*, executed by Michelangelo Buonarroti as the funerary monument for Pope Julius II, which remained incomplete in the artist's studio by the time of his death in 1564.

Ceiling

The iconographic programme foresaw that the ceiling paintings would represent the thematic culmination of the decoration of the entire hall and that the works should be read in that order. Nonetheless, this part of the project was the first that Vasari and his collaborators executed, given that they had to terminate it by 1565, in time for the marriage of Duke Cosimo's son Francesco I to Joanna of Austria.

As we have seen, the panels along the long sides depict episodes of the Pisan war on the left and of the Sienese war on the right.

The paintings on the short sides, meanwhile, are allegorical representations of the four quarters of the City of Florence – two on each side, in the circular coffers – surrounded by the dominion of Cosimo I's duchy.

The central panels show important episodes of Florentine history, including the *Foundation of the City* in Roman times and the *Expansion of the Town Walls* in the Middle Ages – specifically, the moment when Arnolfo di Cambio presented the project for the building of the third circle to the Signoria.

The centre of the decoration represents Cosimo I in triumph as the absolute ruler of the City and all the territories forming part of the Duchy. He is surrounded by the insignia of Florence and of the 21 guilds and by cupids who bear the emblems of his power. A small girl, symbol of the City of Florence, crowns him with a wreath of flowers.

The sculpture groups on the sides of the hall, to the right and left of Giambologna's *Florence Victorious over Pisa* and Michelangelo's *Genius of Victory*, represent six of the *Labours of Hercules*. They were sculpted by Vincenzo de'

Rossi for a fountain that was never finished and brought to the hall in 1592.

The niches on the south side host four sculptures from the rich collection of ancient marbles of Ferdinando I de' Medici.

Toward the south side, on the right, an opening gives onto the Studiolo of Francesco I, the archduke's private, highly secret study. In the past, this room could only be accessed from his apartment. It was built between 1570 and 1575 to accommodate smaller, more precious objects from the Medicean collection. These objects were kept inside cabinets which were hidden behind doors embellished with oval-shaped paintings. The decoration of the vault and walls are the work of more than 30 different artists. The subjects of these paintings connect to the objects once held in the cabinets; based on the relationship between art and nature, they give this refined space the air of an ideal microcosm.

Studiolo of Francesco I

This room is one of the most suggestive and sophisticated that the Museo di Palazzo Vecchio has to offer: still today the Studiolo of Francesco I – that extraordinary 'closet of rare and precious things' – is able

to conjure a vision of the natural world of the 16th century and the fascination felt by the Grand Duke for it. Indeed Francesco I had a passionate interest in the wonders that could emerge from the encounter of nature and art.

The Studiolo was built between 1570 and 1575 from a design by the architect and court painter Giorgio Vasari and the scholar Vincenzo Borghini. Francesco de' Medici commissioned the project after he inherited leadership of the Tuscan duchy from his father Cosimo in 1564.

The small room formed part of the duke's private apartment. It could only be accessed from the bedroom on the side opposite that which leads to the Salone dei Cinquecento, to which it was only directly connected in the 19th century. Both its location and configuration follow the canons of this particular type of space, which was commonly found in princely residences since the Middle Ages. In addition to its function as a study, the room was used to accommodate small, precious objects of the family's collections, which the owners only showed to special guests.

Francesco I in fact asked the space to be built to store 'certain things of his'. The 'little room', as it was then called, was designed to be 'a closet for rare and precious things, for valuable and artistic objects, such as jewels,

medals, carved stones, works in crystal, vases, ingenuities and similar things, objects which are not too large, each placed in the proper cabinet corresponding to its type’.

The cabinets opened from within the thickness of the walls along the lower register of the four sides of the room, behind the oval-shaped paintings, which together with their respective frames formed the cabinet doors.

In accordance with Borghini’s plan, each side of the Studiolo was dedicated to one of the four elements of nature: all objects that were believed to belong to the same category were grouped together in the same set of cabinets. Thus were gemstones and carved bones classified as earth, spirits and glass and metal pieces forged by heat as fire, crystal objects as air, and pearls as water.

The decoration of the doors and the slate registers above – which alternated with bronze sculptures in the niches – reflected the contents of the cabinets: the Biblical, mythological, historical, allegorical and genre scenes alluded to the quality of the objects held within the cabinets.

The entire iconographic programme of the Studiolo thus aims to celebrate the relationship between art and nature, in accordance with Francesco I’s interests. The

grand duke is in fact remembered not so much for his actions as ruler as for his passion for the sciences. Specifically, his fame is based on his assiduity in his personal practice of alchemy and his research of 'occult' phenomena and various forms of experimentation, from the fusion of glass to discovering the formula for porcelain.

The focus of the iconographic scheme coincides with the fresco decorations of the vault. This represents a cosmogram, whose centre is occupied by the personification of Nature. The goddess hands a precious stone to Prometheus, who represents art in his capacity as the inventor of gemstones and rings. Surrounding this central fresco we find allegories of the four elements (earth, water, air, fire), the four qualities (cold, moist, warm, dry), the four humours of man (melancholy, phlegmatic, sanguine, choleric) and the four seasons (in the lunettes, next to the portraits of Francesco's parents).

The particular charm of the Studiolo derives from the originality of the idea and the harmony of the contributions of the 31 different artists, almost all members of the Florentine Accademia del Disegno, who were called upon to compete with one other in embellishing the room. The result is a true treasure chest

of late Florentine Mannerism, consisting of works of some of the best-known painters and sculptors of the era, including Vasari himself, Alessandro Allori, Giovanni Stradano, Bartolomeo Ammannati and Giambologna.

Apartments of Leo X

This quarter is located in the portion of the building constructed at the behest of Cosimo I de' Medici in the mid-16th century. The expansion was realised by Battista del Tasso, who created the new space by demolishing, and in part incorporating, the 13th- and 14-century buildings which were once the offices of the Captain and the Executor of the Orders of Justice.

When Tasso died in 1555, Giorgio Vasari took over the project. Drawing on the iconographic programme of the scholar Cosimo Bartoli, Vasari simultaneously completed the realisation of these rooms and decorated those of the floor above.

Each of the rooms of the quarter is dedicated to an eminent member of the Medici family: Cosimo the Elder, Lorenzo the Magnificent, the *condottiero* Giovanni delle

Bande Nere, Pope Leo X (after whom the quarter is named), Pope Clement VII and Cosimo I himself. In each case, the decorations illustrate the figure's most important achievements.

Each of the rooms further corresponds to one of the same dimensions in the Quarter of the Elements on the floor above. Here the rooms are dedicated to pagan deities in accordance with a precise plan: the aim is to compare the rise to power of the House of Medici on earth with the genealogical origins of the divinities in the celestial sphere.

Some of the rooms of the Quarter of Leo X are open to visitors only on special occasions, as they are normally used as the offices of the Mayor Florence.

1. Room of Cosimo the Elder

Cosimo the Elder (1389-1464) was the head of the main branch of the Medici family. He led Florence's political and economic rise, while establishing the bases for Medicean power; he in fact earned himself the name of *Pater Patriae* ('father of the country'). The paintings recall several episodes and salient features of his success: his triumphant return to Florence a year after his opponents had exiled him; his role as patron and

protector of artists and scholars; and his undertaking of important architectural works.

1556-1558

Paintings: Giorgio Vasari and Marco da Faenza, oil on panel (ceiling) and fresco (walls)

Stuccoes: Leonardo Ricciarelli, Giovanni di Tommaso Boscoli and Mariotto di Francesco, based on a drawing by Bartolomeo Ammannati

2. Room of Lorenzo the Magnificent

Lorenzo de' Medici (1449-1492) was the son of Piero the Gouty and grandson of Cosimo the Elder. He continued the work of his forefathers, concentrating political and economic control of the Florentine republic in his hands. Persuaded that maintaining a balance of power among the states of Italy would prevent foreign incursions, he earned a reputation for promoting peace agreements and alliances.

He was given the epithet of 'magnificent' for his exceptional intellectual talents. He sponsored the Platonic Academy and wrote poetry and prose in Italian. He was a sophisticated collector and a protector of artists of the calibre of Michelangelo Buonarroti. He shaped the

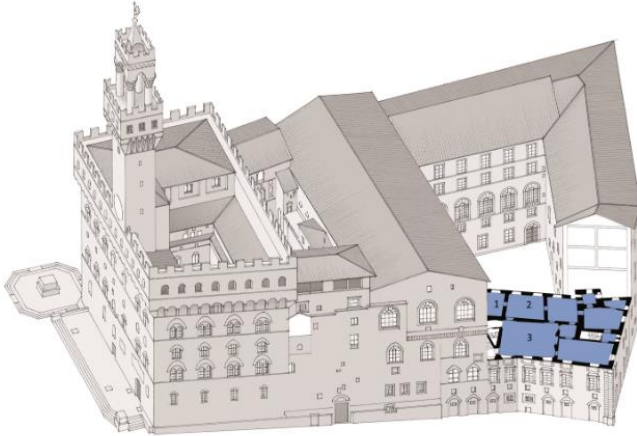
cultural tastes of his era, promoting the development and spread of the humanist message of the Florentine Renaissance.

1556-1558

Paintings: Giorgio Vasari and Marco da Faenza, oil on panel (ceiling) and fresco (walls)

Stuccoes: Leonardo Ricciarelli, Giovanni di Tommaso Boscoli and Mariotto di Francesco, based on drawing by Bartolomeo Ammannati (?)

3. Room of Leo X

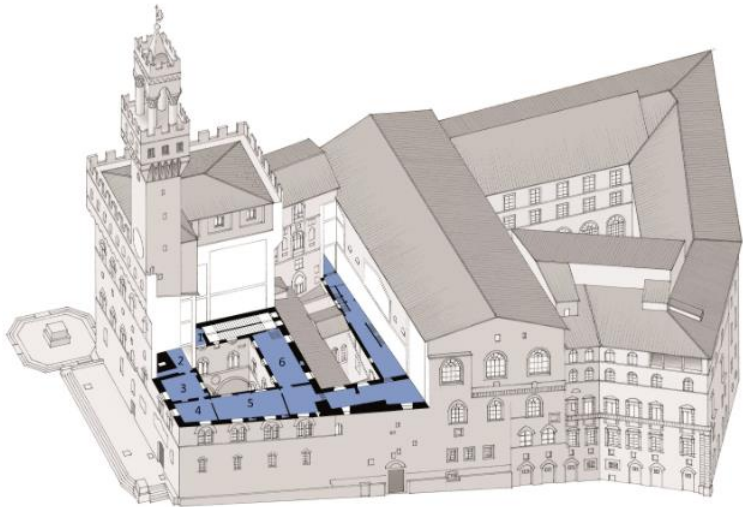


The son of Lorenzo the Magnificent, Giovanni de' Medici (1475-1521) became cardinal at the age of only 14 and went on to become pope in 1513, taking the name of Leo X. He laid the foundations for the future Medicean Duchy of Tuscany. His expansionist policies gained the family new territories, such as the Duchy of Urbino. Growing up in the refined, cultured atmosphere of Lorenzo, Giovanni brought pomp and splendour to the Papal court. He continued the policy of patronising the arts of his predecessor Julius II, making Rome into the main cultural and artistic city of the first half of the 16th century.

1555-1562

Paintings: Giorgio Vasari, Giovanni Stradano and Marco da Faenza, oil on panel (ceiling) and fresco (walls)

Apartments of the Mezzanine



1. Room of the Small Terrace
2. Tower Room
3. Dining Room (Loeser Bequest)
4. Corner Room (Loeser Bequest)
5. Room of the Golden Lilies (Loeser Bequest)
6. Room of the Marzocco

The Apartments of the Mezzanine are located between the first and second floors in the oldest part of Palazzo Vecchio, dating to the beginning of the 14th century. These rooms were built around the Michelozzo courtyard.

In the time of the Priors, the Mezzanine hosted the offices of important governing bodies, such as the Ten of the 'Balia' and the Council of the Seventy. It later became the private residence of Piero Soderini, who was elected gonfaloniere for life. Renovated in the mid-15th century by Michelozzo di Bartolomeo – who designed its characteristic circular windows – it was only marginally involved in the great transformation of Palazzo Vecchio into the ducal residence, which Cosimo I de' Medici ordered in 1540; for this reason, it is the quarter which most completely preserves the austere appearance of a dwelling of mediaeval origins.

During the ducal period, the Mezzanine first hosted the apartments of Maria Salviati, mother Cosimo I de' Medici – from 1540 to 1543 – and then those of the brothers of Eleonora, Don Francesco and Don Luigi of Toledo. After the court moved to Palazzo Pitti, the rooms were gradually occupied by the Wardrobe and its auxiliary offices.

In the 19th century, the rooms of the Mezzanine became the headquarters of the Customs and Consumption Office, which remained here until 1929. At that point, the Municipality of Florence, which had become owner of Palazzo Vecchio in 1871, incorporated these rooms into the restructuring plan that would convert the monumental quarters of Palazzo Vecchio into a museum.

Restoration work in the context of this project brought to light all the relics of the centuries-long history of the Apartments which grant the individual rooms their significance and character. These include the stone lion on the first external stairway of the Palazzo dei Priori, which gives the Room of the Marzocco its name, the two painted wooden ceilings of the same room and the Room of the Golden Lilies (the only ones dating to the 14th and 15th centuries which can still be entirely visited), the old *agiamenti* (water closets), the washbasin and built-in closet for the dishware of the Dining Room, and the remains of a *studiolo* of Cosimo I which looked onto the Terrace Room.

When the renovation was completed in 1934, some of the rooms of the Apartments were decorated with works of art and period furnishings from the bequest of Charles Alexander Loeser, who wished to contribute to the setting up of the new Museo di Palazzo Vecchio. Since

then, these objects constitute the so-called Loeser Bequest, one of the Municipality's most important historical and artistic collections.

3.4.5. The Loeser Bequest

The Loeser Bequest in Palazzo Vecchio consists of over 30 works of art and pieces of period furniture which the American collector Charles Alexander Loeser donated to the Municipality of Florence upon his death in 1928. He aimed to contribute to the renovation of the historic rooms of Palazzo Vecchio, which was then being carried out by the municipal administration.

The bequest was subject to certain conditions. To begin with, the Italian State had to guarantee exemption from any type of tax or duty in the case that his heirs wished to export the remaining works of his collection outside the country. The State made an agreement with the Municipality granting that authority, in exchange for ownership of three collections in possession of the City: the Carrand, Ressman and Franchetti collections, held at the Museo Nazionale del Bargello.

Other conditions connected to the bequest regarded the display arrangements of the donated objects, which had to be exhibited in certain rooms of Palazzo Vecchio and

kept together on a permanent basis. Rather than present the works in typical museum fashion, Loeser wished them to contribute to making the rooms appear 'simply beautiful, for the relaxation and enjoyment of the visitor'. In accordance with the donor's intentions and the principles which until then had guided the arrangement of the monumental quarters of the Palazzo, the collection was accommodated in the central rooms of the Apartments of the Mezzanine in such a way as to evoke the typical interior design of noble residences of Renaissance Florence. The rooms were opened to the public in 1934.

The arrangement of the works indeed takes its lead from the examples of the Medici's residences and those of collectors of Loeser's day, who drew inspiration from descriptions of historical dwellings: both the works of Italian art from the Middle Ages and Renaissance and the furnishings that make up the bequest were placed in the suggestive rooms of the Mezzanine according to purely aesthetic criteria. The most important artworks include an *Angel* by Tino di Camaino, a *Madonna and Child* by Pietro Lorenzetti, two terracotta groups from the workshop of Giovan Francesco Rustici inspired by Leonardo da Vinci's *Battle of Anghiari*, the *Portrait of Laura Battiferri* by Agnolo Bronzino, and the wax model of *Hercules and the Hydra* by Giambologna.

Since 2004, the Charles Loeser Association has collaborated with the Musei Civici Fiorentini in preserving, studying and publicising the bequest. Thanks to the support of this association, the municipal administration has been able to realise a programme of restoration initiatives and analyses of the works of the collection.

Charles Alexander Loeser

The collector and art scholar Charles Alexander Loeser was born in New York in 1864 into a family of German origin. He studied art history at Harvard University in Boston, where he met Bernard Berenson, who encouraged him to spend time in Italy. In 1888 Loeser moved to Florence, where he later married the pianist Olga Lebert Kaufmann.

He would spend the rest of his life in the Tuscan capital, studying mostly drawings of past eras. Above all he collected art, like many other Anglo-Americans residing in Florence in that period.

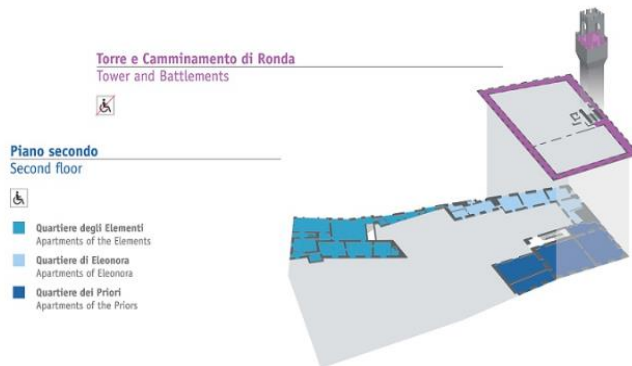
He put together a considerable collection, which beginning in 1915 he assembled in Villa Torri Gattaia near San Miniato al Monte. At the time of his death, his belongings included over 250 prints and old drawings, numerous pieces of period furniture, and works of painting, sculpture and applied art: his collection totalled

nearly 1,000 precious objects. While most were Italian works from the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, he also possessed contemporary objects, such as famous paintings by Cézanne, of whom Loeser was one of the first admirers. The arrangement of these valuable artworks and antiques in the different rooms of the villa was characterised by austere sobriety.

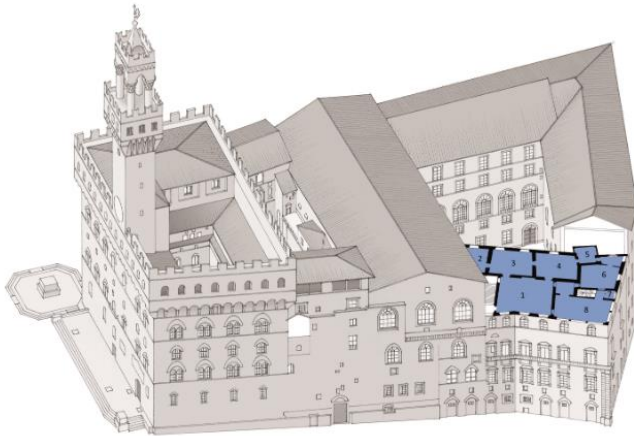
Loeser died in New York in 1928. He had drafted his last will and testament two years before: at this death the entire corpus of his prints and old drawings would be donated to the Fogg Art Museum of Harvard University; the president of the United States could choose eight of his Cézanne works for 'the adornment of the White House'; and a selection of over 30 works of art and pieces of period furniture would go to the municipality of his adopted city, to be exhibited at Palazzo Vecchio as the 'Loeser Bequest'.

Still today the objects of the bequest can be seen in several of the rooms of the Apartments of the Mezzanine. They are displayed according to the aesthetic canons which guided the interior designs of noble residences during the Florentine Renaissance and which the collectors of Loeser's day tended to reproduce in their private dwellings.

Second floor, Tower and Battlements



Apartments of the Elements



Realised following the expansion of the Palazzo ordered by Cosimo I de' Medici, the new quarter was built under the direction of Battista del Tasso between 1551 and 1555. Immediately afterwards, it was partially modified through the raising of the ceiling panels, following a suggestion by Giorgio Vasari. This change marked the beginning of a long collaborative relationship between Cosimo and Vasari, who had taken over the role of court architect and artist after Tasso's death. With the aid of his collaborators, in the space of three years Vasari decorated almost all of the rooms. The embellishment of the Apartments of the Elements was connected to that of the Apartments of Leo X on the floor below by a

unified iconographic programme, conceived by the scholar Cosimo Bartoli.

The paintings pay tribute to the genealogy of the celestial gods as the beginning and end of all things. The cycle begins in the room which gives its name to the Apartments, with the representation of the origins of the four elements of air, water, fire and earth. These were generated by the seed of Uranus, which was spread by Saturn. The following rooms are dedicated to Saturn's wife Ops and to the descendants of the two deities. Each room corresponds to one of equal dimensions on the floor below, dedicated to an eminent member of the Medici family. The creator of the iconographic programme wished to use this juxtaposition to exalt the glory and virtues of the 'earthly' House of Medici by establishing a connection between the dynasty's rise to power and the origins of the celestial deities.

1. Room of the Elements

Dedicated to the four elements (air, water, fire and earth), this room corresponds to the Room of Leo X below. In the same way that the elements were at the origin of all things, Leo X created the conditions for the foundation of the Medicean Duchy of Tuscany. The

ceiling is dedicated to air and the three windowless walls to water, fire and earth, respectively.

1555-1557

Paintings by Giorgio Vasari, Cristofano Gherardi and Marco Marchetti da Faenza, oil on panel (ceiling) and fresco (walls)

Fireplace built from a drawing by Bartolomeo Ammannati, marble

2. Room of Ceres and the Study of Calliope

The main room is dedicated to Ceres, daughter of Saturn and Ops and goddess of agriculture. It coincides with the Room of Cosimo the Elder below: while Ceres looked after the wellbeing of humanity by distributing the fruits of the earth, Cosimo the Elder brought glory and prosperity to the City of Florence.

The adjoining study originally hosted miniatures, small sculptures in bronze and other rare and precious objects of the collection of Cosimo I, which were arranged on shelves or inside cabinets and drawers.

1555-1558

Paintings: Giorgio Vasari, Cristofano Gherardi and Marco Marchetti da Faenza, oil on panel (ceilings) and fresco (friezes)

Glass window depicting *Venus at Her Dressing Table*: Wouter of Antwerp, from a drawing by Giorgio Vasari and Marco da Faenza; painted glass (Study of Calliope)

3. Room of Ops

This room takes its name from Ops, wife of Saturn and goddess of prosperity. It is positioned above the Room of Lorenzo the Magnificent, whose diplomatic abilities were recognised and appreciated by numerous rulers, in the same way that Ops was beloved by many peoples. The divinity is represented in the centre of the ceiling, surrounded by allegories of the seasons and the months of the year, which are accompanied by their respective zodiacal signs.

1555-1557

Paintings: Giorgio Vasari, Cristofano Gherardi and Marco Marchetti da Faenza, oil on panel (ceiling) and fresco (frieze)

Flooring with ducal emblems: Santi Buglioni, terracotta

4. Room of Jupiter

Jupiter is the son of Saturn and Ops and father of all the gods. The room dedicated to him lies above that of Cosimo I. The correspondence foregrounds the glory and virtues of the Medicean duke, comparing him to the king of the celestial divinities. The decoration of the ceiling shows scenes of Jupiter's infancy, when Ops had him secretly raised by the she goat Amaltea to prevent him from being devoured by his father Saturn, like his brothers. Here Amaltea also evokes Capricorn, Cosimo I's zodiacal ascendant.

1555-1556

Paintings: Giorgio Vasari, Cristofano Gherardi and Marco Marchetti da Faenza, oil on panel (ceiling) and fresco (walls)

5. Terrace of Juno

This space originally gave onto a columned portico which was built to offer Duke Cosimo's wife Eleonora of Toledo a view of the quarter of Santa Croce. In honour of the duchess, the room was dedicated to Juno, Jupiter's consort. The original project included the construction of a fountain on the model of the monochrome painting on the wall, which in turn was apparently inspired by

Verrocchio's *Putto with Dolphin*. The space was enclosed during the construction of the last wing of the Palazzo; today the portico corresponds to the side without decorations.

1556-1557

Paintings: Giorgio Vasari, Cristofano Gherardi and Marco Marchetti da Faenza, fresco

Stuccoes: based on drawing by Bartolomeo Ammannati (?)

<i>Putto</i>	<i>with</i>	<i>Dolphin</i>
Andrea	del	Verrocchio
c.1470-1480, bronze		

This sculpture is one of Andrea del Verrocchio's most famous and admired works. The Florentine goldsmith, sculptor and painter was greatly esteemed by the Medici, who commissioned many works to him, such as the funerary monuments for Cosimo the Elder and for his sons Piero and Giovanni in the Basilica of San Lorenzo in Florence. Verrocchio headed a thriving workshop, where artists of the calibre of Leonardo da Vinci and Perugino received their training.

The artist drew inspiration from models of ancient Greece and Rome for this *Putto*, which he created for Lorenzo the Magnificent. The bronze sculpture was

originally placed on a fountain at the Medici villa in Careggi. Because the work was commissioned by Lorenzo and on the basis of comparisons with other works by the sculptor, such as the *Christ and St Thomas* in Orsanmichele (1467-1483), we are able to date the *Putto* to the 1470s.

At the behest of Cosimo I, the work was brought to Palazzo Vecchio in 1557 and placed on the porphyry and marble fountain in the centre of the Michelozzo Courtyard. The fountain was realised by Francesco Ferrucci, called Tadda, Raffaello di Domenico di Polo and Andrea di Domenico, who worked from a drawing by Giorgio Vasari and perhaps also Bartolomeo Ammannati. To better preserve the sculpture, in 1959 it was brought inside the Museum, while a reproduction by the bronze sculptor Bruno Bearzi replaced it in the courtyard.

In the past, Palazzo Vecchio hosted two other works in bronze by Verrocchio: a monumental chandelier in the Chapel of the Priors (today in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam) and a *David with the Head of Goliath*, which Lorenzo and Giuliano de' Medici sold to the Signoria and which was placed at the exit of the Hall of Lilies; today it is held at the Museo Nazionale del Bargello in Florence.

6. Room of Hercules

In Greek mythology, Hercules was born of the union between the god Jupiter and the mortal Alcmena. This is why he was hated by Juno, Jupiter's wife, who tried to kill him by placing two snakes in his crib. Possessing superhuman strength, Hercules is known for his numerous heroic feats, in particular for the so-called Twelve Labours. It is these great deeds which constitute the parallel between this room and its counterpart on the floor below, which is dedicated to valiant *condottiero* Giovanni dalle Bande Nere, father of Duke Cosimo I.

1556-1557

Paintings: Giorgio Vasari and Marco Marchetti da Faenza, oil on panel (ceiling) and fresco (frieze)

7. / 8. Study of Minerva and Terrace of Saturn

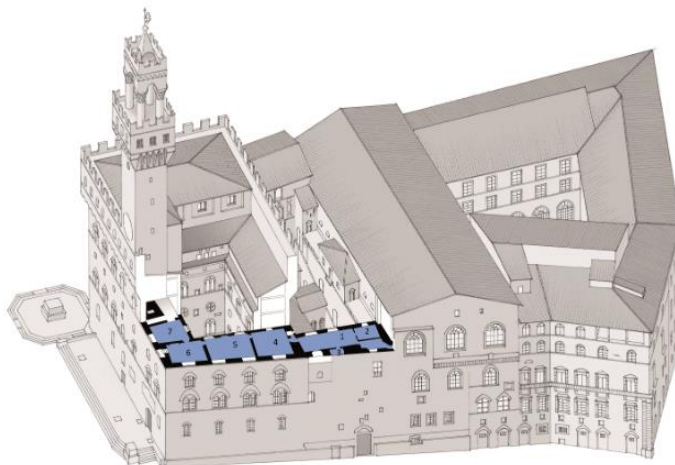
This terrace is dedicated to Saturn, the god of time, who devoured his children to prevent them from one day being able to overthrow him. Only Jupiter survived, thanks to the ruse of his mother Ops. In the decoration of the ceiling, the allegories of the four ages of man and of the hours of the day allude to the god of time. The two panels with the stories of Saturn recall episodes of the life of Pope Clement VII (Giulio de' Medici), to whom the corresponding room below is dedicated.

1557-1566

Paintings: Giorgio Vasari and Giovanni Stradano, oil on panel

The adjoining Study of Minerva was used to accommodate the small-format marble statues of the collection of Duke Cosimo I.

Apartments of Eleonora of Toledo



This quarter forms part of the first nucleus of the building, which dates to the late 13th and early 14th centuries. For 200 years the rooms served as the private dwellings of the members of the old city government, the Priors of the Guilds and the Gonfaloniere of Justice, who during their two-month tenures lived in isolation in the Palazzo.

When Duke Cosimo I de' Medici moved into Palazzo Vecchio together with his court in 1540, he assigned these rooms to his wife Eleonora, daughter of Pedro di Toledo, viceroy of Naples; Cosimo had married Eleonora the year before. All members of the ducal family had their private apartments in this part of the building,

Cosimo on the first floor and his children above the Apartments of Eleonora.

Battista del Tasso was entrusted with the task of converting the spaces into the private rooms of the duchess. Work began immediately, including the creation of the famous private chapel frescoed by Bronzino. Modifications to the original project were made in 1561-62 under the direction of Giorgio Vasari, who together with his collaborators raised nearly all the ceilings and added decorations praising Eleonora of Toledo: these were based on the stories of ancient heroines who are remembered for having 'attained the virtues of men' and even surpassing them. Eleonora had just been able to admire the finished work when she died of malaria in 1562.

1. Green Room

This is the first room which Duke Cosimo I de' Medici wished to have renovated when he moved to the Palazzo between 1539 and 1540. It owes its name to the landscape paintings which once embellished the walls; these, however, were lost and replaced with conventional green paint. By contrast, the vault still contains its original grotesque decoration, inspired by ancient models and representing numerous parrots and

other species of birds. It is believed that the room's original appearance was similar to that of a false loggia. The walls and vault were frescoed by Ridolfo del Ghirlandaio (1540-1542), the same painter who roughly 30 years earlier had decorated the Chapel of the Priors in the Palazzo.

2. Chapel of Eleonora of Toledo

The private chapel of Duchess Eleonora of Toledo was created by closing off a section of the pre-existing room (1539-1540). Decorated in several stages between 1540 and 1565 by Agnolo Bronzino, the chapel is one of the greatest masterpieces of Florentine Mannerism. It pays tribute to the Medicean dynasty by means of a complex iconographic programme centred on the theme of the Eucharist, that is, the recognition of Christ's death as the salvation of humanity. The frescoes of the vault depict the Apocalypse. The connection between the Old and New Testaments is foregrounded by the juxtaposition of the altarpiece with the *Deposition* and the three frescoed walls showing stories of Moses which anticipate Christ's sacrifice and the mystery of the Eucharist. The three panels executed in oil on the end wall were the result of changes made by Bronzino himself to the original programme over the course of two decades (1545-1564):

the current *Deposition* replaced a nearly identical first version, which Cosimo donated to the secretary of Emperor Charles V (today in the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Besançon); the two panels with the *Annunciation* substituted a *Saint John the Baptist* (J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles) and a *Saint Cosmas* (a fragment of which is held in a private collection).

3. Study of Eleonora of Toledo

It is believed that this small room accessed through the long wall of the Green Room was used as a *studiolo* or study. Francesco Salviati decorated the ceiling with grotesques and mythological scenes of Roman inspiration (c.1545-1548), having previously frescoed the walls of the Audience Chamber in the adjacent Apartments of the Priors.

4. Room of the Sabines

The Roman historian Livy narrates that after founding Rome King Romulus used trickery to kidnap the women of the neighbouring Sabines and take them to the new city. The Sabines then attacked Rome, but the women – led by Hersilia, who in the meantime had become Romulus’s wife – broke up the conflict between the two

peoples by throwing themselves into the middle of the fray and pleading for peace. Depicted in the centre of the ceiling, the episode celebrates the feminine virtue of mediation.

1561-1562

Paintings: Giorgio Vasari and Giovanni Stradano, oil on panel. Frames: Battista Botticelli, wood and gilded plaster

5. Room of Esther

Esther was a young Jewish woman of rare beauty. According to the Biblical book that takes her name, she was chosen by the Persian king Ahasuerus as his wife, following the banishment of Queen Vashti. Unaware of his new wife's Jewish origins, Ahasuerus ordered the extermination of the Jews, following the recommendation of his advisor Haman. Esther saved her people by convincing her husband to abandon his plan. The decoration of the room pays tribute to Eleonora of Toledo in her role as duchess.

1561-1562

Paintings: Giorgio Vasari and Giovanni Stradano, oil on panel. Frames: Battista Botticelli, wood and gilded plaster

6. Room of Penelope

Homer narrates in the *Odyssey* that during the long absence of her husband Ulysses, king of Ithaca, Penelope managed to avoid remarrying by putting off choosing one of the suitors until she finished a shroud, which she wove by day but surreptitiously undid by night. The episode is represented in the centre of the ceiling; it celebrates marital fidelity and foregrounds the role of the woman attending to domestic chores while her husband is away at war. The frieze shows the adventures of Ulysses during his return voyage from the Trojan War: the episodes appear in the same order in which they are told by Homer.

1561 – 1562

Paintings: Giorgio Vasari and Giovanni Stradano, oil on panel. Frames: Battista Botticelli, wood and gilded plaster

7. Room of Gualdrada

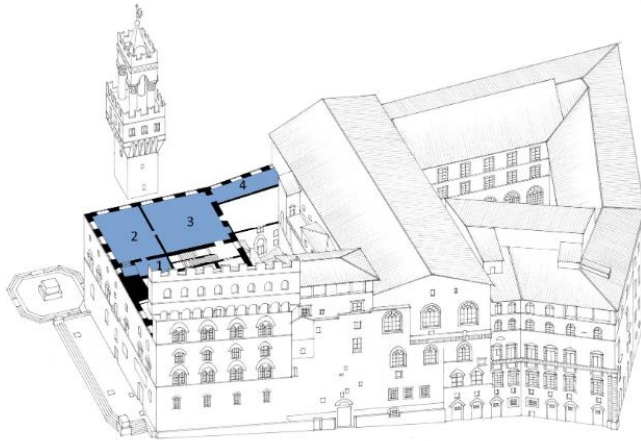
According to legend, the beautiful Florentine Gualdrada lived in the 12th century. Mentioned by Dante Alighieri in the *Divine Comedy*, Gualdrada is remembered for having disobeyed her father's order to let herself be kissed by Emperor Otto IV, who was visiting Florence. Gualdrada protested that only her future husband would be entitled to do that. The episode depicted here pays tribute to the virtues of purity and modesty, while at the same time alluding to Florence's independence. The connection between Gualdrada and the City is repeated in the decoration of the frieze, which shows views of Florence and its traditional festivals.

1561 – 1562

Paintings: Giorgio Vasari and Giovanni Stradano, oil on panel

Frames: Battista Botticelli, wood and gilded plaster

Apartments of the Priors



Like those in the adjacent Apartments of Eleonora, these rooms are located in the oldest nucleus of the building. They were constructed between the late 13th and early 14th centuries to house the Gonfaloniere of Justice and the Priors of the Guilds, who constituted the government of republican Florence: for the duration of their two-month terms, they were obliged to reside permanently in the Palazzo.

The private dwellings were in the section of the second floor which was later converted into the Apartments of

Eleonora of Toledo. By contrast, these rooms were used in common: the chapel for religious functions, which once also held the most precious objects of the Signoria treasury, and the rooms used by the Gonfaloniere and Priors for meetings among themselves or with other magistrates. Subsequently, these spaces were remodelled to create the Audience Chamber and the Hall of Lilies. While the 16th-century renovation erased all traces of the original use of the private residences, here Cosimo I de' Medici limited the modifications to frescoing the walls of the Audience Chamber and constructing a new space, corresponding to today's Hall of Geographical Maps. Nearly all these rooms, then, still appear as they did in 1530, before the fall of the last Florentine Republic.

1. Chapel of the Priors

The existence of a chapel dedicated to St Bernard in the area of the Palazzo reserved for the Priors is documented from the late 14th century; yet we do not know its exact location. Gonfaloniere Piero Soderini commissioned construction of the present chapel to Baccio d'Agnolo during the first Republic (1511); the project continued after the Medicean restoration (1512). Ridolfo del Ghirlandaio, son of the better known Domenico, decorated it with religious subjects, scrolls, Florentine

insignia, and ornamental motifs on a gilded, faux-mosaic background. The vaults resemble the ceiling of the Stanza della Segnatura in the Vatican, painted by Raphael. Thirty-two Latin inscriptions – from the Bible, classical authors or Early Christianity – state the moral and religious principles that were to guide the decisions of the members of government, who gathered here in prayer. The chapel also preserved the most valuable documents and objects of the Signoria treasury, including the famous codex of the *Pandects* of Justinian (533), which was taken from the city of Pisa. Together with a rare Greek Gospel Book (11th century), the codex was preserved in a built-in cabinet to the right of the altar, as is indicated by the inscription on the grating painted on the doors (today they are held at the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana in Florence).

Wall paintings: Ridolfo Bigordi, called Ghirlandaio, fresco, 1511-1514

2. Audience Chamber

This room and the adjacent Hall of Lilies came into being through the division of a pre-existing one, which was as large as the Salone dei Duecento below. It was divided into two spaces by Benedetto da Maiano by means of the

construction of a false wall (1470-1472). At the time, the Signoria used the hall for meetings and hearings.

Duke Cosimo I received his subjects here. He commissioned Francesco Salviati to fresco the chamber with the *Stories of Marcus Furius Camillus*, the Roman general who upon returning from exile freed Rome from the Gauls (390 BC). Similarly, Cosimo de' Medici re-entered Florence only after the death of his predecessor, rising to power and defeating the enemies of the Florentine state.

Ceiling and frieze: Giuliano da Maiano and assistants, gilded and painted wood, 1470-1476 (?)

Door lunette with statue of Justice: Benedetto and Giuliano da Maiano, marble, 1476-1480

Door showing Dante and Petrarch: Giuliano da Maiano and Francesco di Giovanni, called Francione, based on drawing by Sandro Botticelli, carved wood, 1476-1480

Door lunette with monogram of Christ: based on drawing by Baccio d'Agnolo, marble, 1529

Paintings: Francesco de' Rossi, called Salviati, fresco, 1543-1545

3. Hall of Lilies

Like the adjacent Audience Chamber, this space came into being through the partition of a pre-existing hall, which was definitively divided into two rooms by Benedetto da Maiano between 1470 and 1472. The walls of this hall were intended to be decorated with the cycle of Eminent Men, models of civic virtue, parallel to the decorative programme of the previous 14th-century space. In 1482, the Signoria entrusted its execution to the most prominent artists of the day, almost all of whom had participated in embellishing the Sistine Chapel in Rome (Ghirlandaio, Botticelli, Perugino, Biagio d'Antonio and Piero del Pollaiolo); yet only one of them – Domenico Ghirlandaio – completed his task, frescoing one of the walls. The other three were decorated with the Angevin emblem of the golden lilies of France against a gold ground, bordered at the top by a red stripe: this was a tribute to the French, the traditional defenders of Florence's freedom. The veneer inlay figures of the poets Dante and Petrarch over the door leading to the Audience Chamber were part of the unfinished decorative programme.

Ceiling: Benedetto and Giuliano da Maiano, gilded and painted wood, 1472-76

Lintel above door with statue of Florence's patron saint John the Baptist: Benedetto and Giuliano da Maiano, marble, 1476-80

Door with Dante and Petrarch: Giuliano da Maiano and Francesco di Giovanni, called Francione, after a drawing by Sandro Botticelli, inlaid wood, 1476-80

Paintings: Domenico Bigordi, called Ghirlandaio, fresco, 1482-85

Wall decorations with French lilies: Bernardo di Stefano Rosselli, fresco and gold leaf, 1490

PAINTINGS

1. Saint Zenobius, bishop and protector of Florence, between Saints Eugenius and Crescentius and the Marzocco lion, symbol of the city
2. Eminent men of the ancient Roman Republic (from left to right, Brutus, Mucius Scaevola, Marcus Furius Camillus, Publius Decius Mus, Scipio Africanus, Cicero)
3. Portraits of Roman emperors (from left to right, Hadrian, Caligula, Vespasian, Nero, Faustina the Younger, Antoninus Pius)

DECORATIVE OBJECTS

- a. Lion with a human head

Florentine stonemason

First half of 14th century

gilded and painted stone

storerooms of the Gallerie di Firenze (1871)

Donatello

Judith and Holofernes

1457-64

bronze, with marble and granite pedestal

The famous bronze sculpture commissioned by the Medici to Donatello was originally located in the garden of the family's city residence, today's Palazzo Medici Riccardi.

According to the Biblical story, the young Jewish widow Judith saved her city from the attack of the Assyrian army by beheading its general Holofernes after seducing and intoxicating him.

The sculpture captures the moment in which the heroine is about to deliver the final blow. The expressive power of the work was once enhanced by the gilding which

decorated Judith's clothing and sword as well as the base, of which only faint traces remain today.

The stone pedestal once bore an inscription – also lost today – which stated that the work symbolised the triumph of humility over arrogance and virtue over licentiousness. This last-named characteristic is alluded to in the bacchanalian scenes on the bronze base. Another lost inscription, with a dedication to Piero de' Medici, described the work as a model of strength and liberty, urging citizens to follow Judith's example in defence of the Republic.

This second meaning attributed to the sculpture became predominant in 1495: following the expulsion of the Medici, the Signoria of Florence confiscated the work, placing it in front of the main entrance to Palazzo Vecchio and substituting the above-mentioned inscriptions with the current one, which refers to the new function assumed by the bronze as an emblem of liberty of the Florentine people.

In 1504, the sculpture ceded this location of honour to Michelangelo's David. Two years later it was moved to the Loggia della Signoria, where it remained until 1919, when it was again installed in front of the Palazzo, to the left of its former position. For conservation reasons, it

was brought inside the Palazzo in the 1980s, while a copy replaced it in its outdoor setting.

4. Old Chancellery

This room is part of the section of the Palazzo that was built in 1511, when Piero Soderini was gonfaloniere. It linked the 14th-century nucleus with the Hall of the Great Council (today's Salone dei Cinquecento), which was constructed in the late 15th century. Access to the room is in fact gained by one of the double-arched windows in the east wall of the Hall of Lilies, which before the renovation faced onto the Customs Courtyard. Originally, there were windows on both of the long sides. The space hosted the office of the First Chancellor of the Republic, who worked by the side of the gonfaloniere in the management of the Palazzo. In 1511, this position was held by the humanist Marcello Virgilio Adriani, whose fame, however, was overshadowed by that of a contemporary, who served as secretary of the Second Chancellery – the great statesman and writer Niccolò Machiavelli, author of *The Prince*, *The Mandrake* and *The Art of War*. In remembrance of the original function of the room, in the last century two representations of Machiavelli were placed here, including the bust made from the mould of his funeral mask, a work donated by

the collector Charles Loeser. In the era of Duke Cosimo de' Medici and his successors, this was one of the rooms of the Wardrobe, where belongings of the ruling dynasty were safeguarded.

Hall of Geographical Maps, or Wardrobe

During the period of the Priors, the room called today the Hall of Geographical Maps did not exist, as can be seen by the traces of the windows of the neighbouring Chancellery visible on the wall to the left of the entrance. When Duke Cosimo I de' Medici moved to the Palace, the adjacent rooms went into forming the quarter of the Wardrobe, where all the court's belongings were kept. At Cosimo's behest, this space was later created by Giorgio Vasari (1561-1565) to serve the dual purpose of the main room of the Wardrobe and the area dedicated to cosmography.

The design of the new room was planned by Vasari in collaboration with the cosmographer Fra' Miniato Pitti. Specifically, the project included: paintings depicting the constellations on the ceiling; large wooden cabinets along the walls, with geographic panels on the doors and images of flora and fauna of various regions of the world

on the bases; above these, busts of princes and emperors and 300 portraits of eminent men. Finally, two large globes in the centre of the room were meant to appear theatrically from the opening in the central ceiling panels: the celestial sphere was to remain hanging in air, while the terrestrial one was dropped until it reached the floor.

The idea of representing in one room the entire world as it was known in the mid-16th century reflected Cosimo's interest in geography, natural science and commerce. At the same time, it betrayed the attempt to celebrate the duke as ruler of the universe, a role which, incidentally, had already been allegorically attributed to him in the association of his name with the Greek word *kosmos*.

The ambitious project was not brought to completion. Dionigi di Matteo Nigetti built the cabinets in walnut (1564-1571), which at first contained tapestries and other draperies, then gold and silver objects, and finally old weapons. Of the 53 geographical panels that were finished, 30 were painted by the Dominican Egnazio Danti (1564-1575) and 23 by the Olivetan monk Stefano Bonsignori (1575-1586). Twenty-seven were taken from Ptolemy's *Geography* (2nd century BC), with updates by modern writers; the others, including those representing America, came from more recent sources. Egnazio Danti

created the large terrestrial globe (1564-1571), which, however, was placed elsewhere, only to be positioned in its original location in the last century. The centre of the wall in front of the entrance once hosted Lorenzo della Volpaia's 'Clock of the Planets', which had been held in the adjacent Hall of Lilies since 1510. This spectacular clock was destroyed in the 17th century; a modern reconstruction is preserved at the Museo Galileo in Florence. Finally, Cristofano dell'Altissimo began painting the portraits of eminent men, which were to be placed on the cabinet doors; he copied them from Paolo Giovio's famous collection in Como. By 1570, over 200 portraits were completed and placed in three rows; yet in the next decade they were moved to the corridor of the Uffizi Gallery, where they can still be seen today.

Tower and Battlements

At 95 metres in height, the Tower of Palazzo Vecchio soars above the City, constituting one of Florence's unmistakable symbols and points of reference. Together with the crenellated Battlements, the Tower belongs to the first nucleus of the Palazzo, built between 1299 and the beginning of the 14th century. Its construction was perhaps based on a design by Arnolfo di Cambio. Inside the Tower, 223 stone steps lead up to the highest level,

a crenellated lookout which offers a spectacular view of the City.

The austere structure of the building met precise political and administrative needs. Yet it further had the function of protecting the organs of government from outside attacks, as can be seen from the massive external walls, the Embattlements with their machicolations and the high lookout. The Tower further symbolically loomed above the tower houses of Florentine families: the government of the Primo Popolo in fact decreed that these could not exceed roughly 29 metres in height.

The Tower consists of two parts. The first, which was completed by 1302, is incorporated into the walls of the Palazzo and erected on the foundations of the pre-existing Tower of the Foraboschi (also known as the Tower of the Cow). The second part was completed in the following two decades; as it rises, it protrudes over the Battlements, supported by corbels. This was a bold architectural choice, yet necessitated by the wish to create aesthetic continuity with the building's façade.

Inside the Tower, 223 stone steps lead up to the highest level, a crenellated lookout which offers a spectacular view of the City.

Along the way, a small cell appears, called the Alberghetto ('little hotel'), where two eminent

Florentines were imprisoned: Cosimo the Elder in 1433, before his one-year exile in the wake of accusations of having plotted against the Republic; and Girolamo Savonarola in 1498, while he awaited his execution for heresy in Piazza della Signoria.

The top of the Tower hosts two bell chambers, which contain three bells: the so-called *Martinella*, which served to summon Florentines together; the *Campana del Mezzogiorno* ('midday bell') and the *Campana dei rintocchi* ('chiming bell'). The spire contains a copy of the old weather vane with a representation of the Marzocco lion and the Florentine fleur-de-lis; the original is preserved inside the Palazzo. The clock still has the original mechanism created by the Bavarian Georg Ledel in 1667, while the framing dates to restoration operations carried out in the 20th century.

OPENING HOURS AND TICKETS

Information for visitors

Admission is subject to availability of spaces. To guarantee entry, you may reserve a timeslot when purchasing your ticket online on the official website (bigliettimusei.comune.fi.it). You may also write to info@musefirenze.it or phone 055/276 8224 to make reservations.

Opening hours

Museo di Palazzo Vecchio

Every day except Thursday: 9 am - 7 pm

Thursday: 9 am - 2 pm

Tower

Every day except Thursday: 9 am - 5 pm

Thursday: 9 am - 2 pm

Please arrive 15 minutes prior to your reservation time.

In case of rain, the Tower will be closed to the public;

visitors will still be able to access the mediaeval Battlements.

Last tickets will be sold one hour before closing time.

Tickets

Museum

Regular tickets (Museum tour only)

Full Price: €12.50

Discounted: €10.00

Combined tickets (Museum tour + exhibition)

Combined Full Price: € 17.50

Combined Discounted: € 15.50

Tower

Full Price: €12.50

Discounted: €10.00

Museum visitors under the age of 18: free entry

Card del Fiorentino

Personal card valid for 365 days: €10.00

(available only to residents of Florence and the municipalities of the Metropolitan Area)

Ticket pricing policies

Discounted tickets: 18-25 years of age and university students

Free entry: persons under 18 years of age; groups of students and their teachers of every nationality (group leaders must present list of participants on their school's letterhead); tourist guides and interpreters; journalists; disabled persons and their accompanying persons; members of ICOM, ICOMOS and ICCROM; persons visiting the Museum for study or research purposes, when certified by their institutions; persons subject to special agreements with the Museum; persons visiting the Museum in connection with events with particular cultural and social relevance.

Firenzecard: €85.00. Valid for 72 hours from first use; guarantees priority access.