# Artistic Treasures of the University of Genoa

edited by Giacomo Montanari



## Genuense Athenaeum

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## Dear Readers,

Since 2006, the University of Genoa's premises in Via Balbi have been a UNESCO World Heritage Site, in the context of the *Strade Nuove* and the *Palazzi dei Rolli*. It is a recognition that gives further value to a precious and prestigious artistic and architectural heritage, which also includes historical and monumental buildings.

The University is the primary beneficiary of this wealth: professors, students and technical-administrative staff have the rare privilege of working and studying every day, under frescoed vaults, surrounded by beauty witness to the eminent past of our palaces, closely linked to the history and evolution of our city.

We are aware that the University, as custodian and guardian of these assets, has the task of making them known and appreciated by a wider public. In recent years, therefore, it has adhered to the Rolli Days initiative promoted by the Genoa City Council and opened its buildings to guided tours, in an effective action of scientific and cultural dissemination actively involving many young people.

This book is part of this sharing project and aims to accompany you on an ideal walk from the Via Balbi area (near the Old Port) with the *Palazzi dei Rolli* and the *Palazzo dell'Università*, once a Jesuit monastery, to the *circonvallazione a monte* (the uphill road linking the city centre to the 19thcentury residential neighbourhood) with the imposing Albergo dei Poveri, once a 'citadel of charity' and now the site of the first nucleus of the Social Sciences campus, that is expected to expand in the coming years; from the 15th-century ensamble of Santa Maria delle Grazie, in the heart of the ancient city, to the elegant Villa Giustiniani Cambiaso on the stately hill of Albaro.

The University of Genoa is delighted to show you its treasures, a very important artistic and historical heritage: in its capacity as an institution of education, research and scientific dissemination, the University, once again, intends to act as a cultural bridge of dialogue and transmission of knowledge so that attention to the past is never lost while working and studying projected towards the future.

> THE RECTOR Federico Delfino

In the hundreds of archival documents that have been read and in the thousands that have not the voices of the dead live on. The tone and timbre of those unheard voices can be recreated by the historian who does not shrink from the pious task of restoring the natural connection between word and image.

### Aby Warburg, Art of the Portrait and the Florentine Bourgeoisie, 1902.

The history and the mission of the University of Genoa are also shown in its historical buildings and in the choice to establish root in the most densely populated area of the city, bringing there, over time, the vision of research, the impact of teaching and the sharing of scientific diffusion. The decision to include in this volume only some of the historic buildings used or owned by the University was determined by the desire to declare the great cultural value of the spaces where students of all disciplines can now pursue their education in a mutual exchange of influences. It is significant, I think, that the spectacle of the vaults frescoed by Valerio Castello in the ferment of the Baroque language, as well as the Renaissance vitality of the architecture of the Perugian Galeazzo Alessi, can be seen and experienced by future literati as well as engineers during their education. As it is amazing to see the value of the highest technological achievements come to life in the ancient complex of 'the new' Santa Maria delle Grazie. Hybrid views and perspectives, where the monument of high artistic value and its needs, its problems and its conservation perspectives are juxtaposed with the values of education, the role of teaching laboratory and the vision of an increasingly close relationship with the city and its inhabitants. A necessary vision that in recent years has been pursued with unwavering strength and determination to make the Athenaeum's buildings available to those who wish to learn more about Genoa's centrality between the past and the future through art, architecture, and history of these places. Thanks to the extraordinary restoration work performed in the rooms of Palazzo Balbi

Senarega, coordinated at a scientific level by Lauro Magnani, and to the ongoing recovery of the magnificent and unique cycle of paintings on Columbian themes in Palazzo De Ferrari Chiavari Belimbau and Palazzo Rebuffo Serra, the Athenaeum is not only an exceptional centre for scientific research, but also one of the most specialised and innovative cultural centres in Italy. Suffice it to say, the extraordinary resources and potential of a group of sculptures such as those in the Grimaldi Chapel (once in the destroyed church of San Francesco di Castelletto), created by Giambologna when he was at the height of his activity as a bronze founder and sculptor. The restoration of this complex, its adaptation for use by the external public – as well as by students – and its return to full and transparent knowledge at national and international level would be enough to make the heritage of the University of Genoa one of the most important places for the study of Renaissance art. An activity that certainly requires time, study, and care. This book, based on the research projects carried out by the University's professors over the last forty years and in all disciplines, aims to shed light on this complex, too often little-known, and it is an invitation to discover, experience and visit the riches that the University of Genoa offers its students and all citizens of Italy and the world.

Giacomo Montanari



## Palazzo Balbi Senarega

4 Via Balbi Faculty of Humanities

Built for the Balbi brothers, Giacomo and Pantaleo, in 1618 the palace took on its distinctive shape, which Rubens also recalled and praised in his Palaces of Genoa (Antwerp, 1622). This first phase, under the direction of Bartolomeo Bianco from Como, included the innovative solution of two superimposed noble floors, thus creating a double representation space suitable for the clientele. However, it is the second phase of work, starting in 1645, that is of the greatest interest for the facies that the building presents today. The very young Francesco Maria Balbi, son of Giacomo and grandson of Pantaleo who both died prematurely, took over the building and immediately showed an extraordinary flair for business and artistic investment. Appointing the architect Pietro Antonio Corradi, the ideal heir to Bianco's proto-baroque architectural idioms, Francesco Maria had the curtain wall, which closed the southern side of the colonnaded inner courtyard with a fountain, opened up to a garden surrounded by two new wings of the palace, projecting towards the sea. The garden, which was built on the site of medieval buildings in the area, and which Francesco Maria Balbi was able to flatten out by winning an acquittal in an urbanisation case - still commemorated by the plaques in

Piazzetta del Roso - is the fulcrum around which the pyrotechnic design of the decorative and communicative layout of the entire area was directed. In the second piano nobile, Balbi decided to carry out a decorative campaign that would cover all the rooms of what became a true state apartment, one of the most sumptuous in northern Italy. Around the middle of the 1650s, he engaged the services of the young and brilliant painter Valerio Castello, entrusting him with the direction of the entire pictorial apparatus. Castello's first attempt was the gallery overlooking the new garden, the result of the infilling of the original loggia space. Here, for the first time in Genoa, Valerio's spatial experimentation expresses the fully Baroque sensibility of bodies moving freely between illusory architectures, unbound by scores, frames or panels. The mythological story of the Rape of Proserpine, frescoed in the west lunette, is the driving force that triggers the entire narrative: Pluto's violent gesture, dragging the beautiful daughter of Ceres into the nebulous depths of hell, prompted Mercury to immediately warn all the Olympian gods, who were crowded together in excitement on the corbels of the narrow vault, boldly extended by the artist's brush. The announcement of the messenger of the gods is echoed by the figure of Ceres, who, furious, turns to Jupiter for justice: the lord of Olympus stands at the other end of the gallery, his arm outstretched towards the lunette from which it all began, neatly stitching together the narrative dimension of the vault. It will be he who determines that the young and beautiful Proserpine will spend six months with her mother, on the surface of the earth, and six months in the underworld, with her husband Pluto, thus determining the alternation of seasons that follow the feelings that Ceres - the divinity in charge of controlling nature - feels when she knows her daughter in the darkness of Hades, in Autumn and Winter, or when she has her at her side, in Spring and Summer. The gallery closes with the eastern lunette representing the fall of Phaeton. This event was probably chosen as a myth linked to the Sun, since it is located where the Sun rises, while Proserpine's descent into the underworld corresponds to Occasus, also marking the space according to the path of the diurnal star. The use of the gallery is, however, only one of the signs of Valerio Castello's commitment to Francesco Maria Balbi: the same years certainly date back to the frothy room known as the Room of Peace, Joy and Abundance, from the three allegories that inhabit the central part of the vault, and to the precious salon of Leda with the swan, a refined space virtuously designed on a mathematical and perspectival level by the Bolognese Andrea Seghizzi, who worked in synergy with the Genoese painter in these two salons and in the great central hall of the residence. It is the monumental salon that marks the first break in the continuity of the decoration of Francesco Maria Balbi's palace: the two terrible years of the plague (1656-1658), which reduced the population of the Republic of Genoa by two-thirds and severely affected its productive capacity, including, of course, its artistic capacity, probably occurred between the realisation of Seghizzi's powerful illusionist architecture and Valerio's figurative decoration. In the centre, terrible and unstoppable, is the representation of *Time* in the form of Saturn devouring his children, while on a chariot drawn by the Hours he sweeps away and destroys all earthly vanities, from temporal to spiritual power, from economic riches to artistic achievements. All around, in the air, double the height of the adjoining rooms, some figures of exceptional figurative strength soar into the space of the vault: Fortune, beautiful and naked, climbs an illusory balustrade and dances on an unstable sphere, supported by a swarm of putti, while her cornucopia pours out all that is good on those watching her from below; on the opposite side, Fame, blowing her trumpet high into the sky, looks out from a similar balcony. Fame and fortune, in short, seem to be the only dynamics to escape the cruel inevitability of time: fame for deeds, fortune to protect those who have received it by lot. Perhaps Francesco Maria Balbi had inspired the painter to find the right images, the right signs, the right suggestions for a bitter reflection on the transience of life: in fact, his very young and brilliant cousin, the true golden boy of the Balbi family, had lost his life to the terrible contagion, despite his exceptional natural gifts and despite his wealth. Even Valerio Castello, who survived the plague, died in 1659 at the age of less than 40, leaving the decorative project unfinished. Around 1670, Francesco Maria Balbi superimposed on Castello's works the works of Domenico Piola (Salon of Apollo among the Muses, Salon of Zeus among the Arts), Giovanni Andrea Carlone (Salon of Balbi's Glory, Virtue overcoming Vice) and, in the 1690s, Gregorio De Ferrari (Salon of Hercules'

Triumph, Salon of Zephyrus and Flora, Salon of Truth raised by Time, Gallery of the Loves of the Gods). In the rooms of the Gallery of Proserpina, the Salon of Apollo among the Muses and the Gallery of the Loves of the Gods, an ideal fil rouge that brings together all the phases of the palace's decoration and presents the best of the Genoese baroque painting scene, the University of Genoa has recently carried out a major restoration which, in addition to addressing the statics of the rooms and the state of conservation of the frescoes, has provided new and fundamental information on the decorative history of the palace and has enabled this wing to be reopened to the public. Something remains to be told that is unfortunately no longer visible today in the monumental rooms that are used as wonderful libraries for students, visitors, and citizens: the incredible collection of paintings that Francesco Maria Balbi had amassed. From the Flemish Primitives to the beloved Venetians, such as Titian and Tintoretto, to the portraits of Antoon Van Dyck, Rubens, Guercino, Guido Reni, culminating in the astonishing panel depicting the Fall of Saul, painted by Caravaggio and now in the Odescalchi collection in Rome. The Balbi collection represented one of the richest picture galleries of the still extraordinary Genoa of the Siglo de los Genoveses, the financial capital of Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries and one of the artistic and cultural centres of the Mediterranean. An exceptional, but completely dispersed, collection, which today can only be virtually restored through studies in the splendid rooms of Palazzo Balbi Senarega.

























## Palazzo dell'Ateneo

5 Via Balbi Faculty of Social Sciences

The magnificent Palazzo dell'Ateneo at 5, Via Balbi has been the location of the University of Genoa for almost three hundred years and it was initially designed by the Como architect Bartolomeo Bianco to house the College of the Society of Jesus.

The Jesuits bought a lot of land from the nobleman Stefano Balbi, who had it built thanks to the interest of his brother Paolo, himself a member of the Society. The earliest known drawing of the building dates from 1634 and shows in detail the design of the architect, who faced many technical problems in constructing a building of such proportions.

In fact, the land available to the Jesuit Fathers for the construction of the College became very steep a short distance from the road, climbing up the Pietraminuta hill in great cliffs. Bartolomeo Bianco has therefore designed a continuous succession of volumes that follow each other into the depths, climbing the steep slope and elegantly connecting them with agile staircases, 'aerial' bridges from one level of the structure to another. In this way, the atrium, greeted by the monumental portal, almost seems to shrink in comparison with the play of perspectives that draws the eye upwards and leads it, along the entrance staircase, to walk the steps of the intersecting staircases against the backdrop of the hanging garden. Under the gaze of the mighty lions sculpted in marble by Francesco Biggi - based on a design by Domenico Parodi from 1718 - one climbs the steep monumental staircase to reach the bright space of the school courtyard. According to the architectural concept of the colleges of the Society of Jesus, the courtyard was to be the functional centre of the whole complex: a kind of meeting and educational place, as well as a possible space for theatrical and religious performances. Traditionally, the great colleges had two different courtyards: the first was for the use of students, guests, and teachers, and was essentially a public space; the second was a courtyard reserved for the private activities of the Jesuit Fathers, and was accessible only to them. In Genoa, however, it was unfortunately not possible to create both spaces and it was therefore decided to favour the public courtyard. This choice underlined the importance attached to common areas and, consequently, to the possibility of making the courtyard and its loggia levels a pleasant place for young people embarking on a long and complex course of study. On the courtyard floor, there were

several lecture halls, of which the Theology Hall (now the University Chapel, on the left) and the Law Hall (now the Cabella Hall, on the right) still stand today as evidence of their original structure.

Crossing the courtyard and going up the large staircase, one reaches the loggia on the first floor: on the side facing Via Balbi there is the magnificent space of the Aula Magna, once the hall for literary exercises, decorated with a cycle of frescoes that cover the entire surface. According to the descriptions of Carlo Giuseppe Ratti, the so-called 'Anonymous of 1818', and Federico Alizeri, amidst large grisaille statues, flights of putti and a flurry of floral decorations, springing from vases and shells on the corners of the vault and then intertwining to form a rich garland around the central medallion, one could admire the representation of a theme very dear to the Society of Jesus: the Triumph of the Name of Jesus, with the presence of the Virgin Mary and the main founders of the Order, such as Ignatius, Francis Xavier and Francis Borgia. Today, unfortunately, nothing remains of the decoration of the central oculus: after being bombed by the Piedmontese army, led by General Alfonso La Marmora, which was called in 1848 to suppress the city's revolt, the fresco was destroyed on 27 December 1868, twenty years later, and was never properly repaired. Giuseppe Isola, professor of drawing at the Ligustic Academy of Fine Arts, was called in to restore what had been lost. In the central space of the vault, instead of religious subjects, he painted patriotic celebrations, choosing to illustrate the Triumph of Ligurian science, in which the great men of Genoa's millenary history surround the personification of Wisdom.

In the meantime, following the suppression of the Jesuits in 1773, the magnificent complex in via Balbi had become the seat of the secular University, the first true Genuense Athenaeum, administered first by the Ligurian Republic and then by the Kingdom of Italy. The marble and bronze busts that can be seen under the loggias on the first and second floors date from this period, which is closely linked to the rhetoric of the Risorgimento: professors, scholars, patriots and important city and university personalities, who gave their knowledge, their commitment and their lives to their country and to the Genoa Athenaeum, were to show the students the examples to follow, a function that the saints and scholars of the Society had performed in the Jesuit rhetoric up to a hundred years earlier. Isola's work, however, was no more successful than Carlone's and it too collapsed after the allied bombing of Genoa in 1944. There are some historical photographs of it before and after the collapse, and some fragments torn up by the Superintendency before the removal of the crumbling parts, which are now kept in the offices of the Law Department.

At the end of the Second World War, in order to fill the void left by the bombs, a public competition was held and won by the Sardinian painter Francesco Menzio. In 1958, he created a work that broke completely with the surrounding decorative apparatus, drawing inspiration from the decoration of the Genoese Portolani and recovering a religious idea that is realised, at the edges of the new abstract space of the vault, in the presence of the Crucifix and the three Marys.

The former Fabbrica Domestica (or House of the Jesuit Fathers) and the third floor (or Rector's floor) are

also part of the College complex. The former Fabbrica Domestica is an imposing structure located behind the courtyard and today houses the offices of the University of Genoa, as well as study and teaching rooms; the third floor contains the long St. Ignatius Corridor, which culminates in the Aula della Meridiana, the Domestic Oratory called 'Aula Ligure' and the Rector's Office of the University of Genoa, which is housed in the same premises where the Rector of the Jesuit College once resided. From the third floor it is also possible to access the former great garden of the College, which was transformed into a botanical garden in the 19th century; the space is still used for this purpose, with the construction of the Palazzina Hanbury, which houses the Botanical centre of the University of Genoa, with study, teaching and research laboratories. In front of this entrance to the garden is the long Corridor of St. Ignatius, which crosses the entire western wing of the complex, from the rock to Via Balbi: at its beginning, on the uphill side, is the room of the Domestic Oratory, today known as the 'Aula Ligure' and used as the University's reception room. Intended as a secluded and private devotional space for the exclusive use of the Jesuit Fathers, whose personal rooms also opened onto the Corridor of St. Ignatius, the room of the Domestic Oratory was decorated between 1704 and 1709 by the virtuoso hand of the Genoese painter Domenico Parodi, probably the last fresco in the entire complex before the 19th century renovations. The monochrome figures, sculpted by Parodi's hand and accentuated by gradual, soft shadows, stand out in an all-encompassing decoration of false architecture created with surprising mastery by the Bolognese quadraturist Al-



dovrandini. Thus the icons of the great saints of the Society stand out on the fake green Polcevera marble, together with the image of the Virgin and the faces of the three Jesuits crucified in Japan, a devotion that was not very widespread, but which in the Genoese College is also reflected in the iconography of a painting kept in the Rector's office and which was intended to show the Fathers how far their missionary vocation should go. At the end of the long corridor, overlooked by numerous doors decorated with elegant wooden frames and surmounted by an oculus that allows light to enter and ensures safe lighting, is the Aula della Meridiana. Today this ancient hall is used for teaching and also for the awarding of degrees in law, while it was designed by the Jesuit Fathers as a study room and, from 1771, also as a place for measuring time, thanks to a floor sundial in marble and brass made by the French Father Correard, a precious instrument that is still in perfect working order and testifies to the College's lively interest in astronomy, mathematics and astronomical observation techniques. From the corridor accessed from the lecture hall, it is still possible to reach the spacious terraces above the large loggias on the first and second floors, in order to admire the astonishing architectural beauty and grace that is the main feature of the Genoese University building. In fact, one's eyes can wander between the two orders of loggias below, crossing the spaces between the double columns and the marble balustrades designed by Bartolomeo Bianco and effectively completed by Father Orazio Grassi, an excellent mathematician and Rector of the Genoese College. The terraces are dominated by the solid and austere façade of the former Fabbrica Domestica, on which there are two sundials, one measuring the time of day and the other the time of the year you are in, below which you can see the evergreen foliage of the orange trees of the hanging garden, crowned by the shrine to the Students of the University of Genoa who fell in the First World War, a monument erected in the 1920s. At the beginning of the 19th century, the monumental remains of the demolished San Francesco's Church di Castelletto were acquired, consisting of a complex of bronze sculptures made by the Flemish artist Giambologna for the Grimaldi Chapel from 1579. The six figures of Virtue are kept in the large room of the Great Hall, while the seven bas-reliefs depicting scenes from the Passion of Christ are in the University Chapel on the first floor of the complex. All in all, this is a unique group of masterpieces that represents one of the high points of bronze statuary in the second half of the 16th century in Europe: suffice it to say, for example, that the artist himself wanted a second series of the magnificent bas-reliefs executed for Genoa for his personal tomb in the Basilica of Santissima Annunziata in Florence.

























## Palazzo Balbi Cattaneo

2 Via Balbi Faculty of Humanities

The palace, which marks the beginning of the imposing 17th-century axis of Via Balbi, today n. 2, is the only one to be made up of an existing building and is in fact the original residence of the family. With the construction of the street itself, which can be dated between 1605 and 1616, the ancient dwelling, which already in 1588 deserved to be included in the Rolli of public lodgings, albeit in the third class, was completely transformed and adapted to the new requirements of monumentality and representation. After the death of Gio. Francesco Balbi, the building was reorganised on the pre-existing structures at the behest of his son Stefano, who in 1614, during the construction phases of the road axis and the future palaces, presented and had approved by the Padri del Comune, the project with relative planimetry illustrating the changes to be made to the existing structure, which envisaged a new elevation on via Balbi and a general reorganisation of the volumes in plan and elevation. In this way, Stefano redefined the layout of the building, extending it to the corner of the new street, with a new noontime entrance from Piazza della Nunziata, revising the distances from the next house on the street axis, owned by his cousins Pantaleo and Giacomo, and prefiguring the boundaries that still define it today.

These works, interrupted in 1629 when Stefano moved to Milan, were completed by his cousin Francesco Maria Balbi, to whom Stefano sold the properties overlooking Strada del Guastato. In fact, in 1649, at the behest of Francesco Maria, the restoration of the palace on the side of via Balbi was completed, following the project begun in 1614: in 1664, the residence was added to the Rolli of Public Housing and included in the first compass, a sign of the great prestige it had achieved. The loggia of the piano nobile, with its balustrades and marble parapets, and the vaults and lunettes of the adjoining rooms, can still be seen in Piazzetta Andorlini. The new access to the palace from Piazza della Nunziata is testified by several landscapes of the palace between the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century and the middle of the 18th century, among which the etching Veduta di Strada Balbi by Antonio Giolfi, made in collaboration with Giuseppe Torricelli and published in 1769. The palace took on its present appearance in the second half of the  $18^{\mbox{\tiny th}}$  century, thanks to the work of Gregorio Petondi from Ticino, appointed chamber architect in 1772, to whom we also owe the layout of the Strada Nuovissima (today Via Cairoli), the design of Palazzo Balbi-Lomellini on the corner of Via Cairoli

and Largo della Zecca, and his collaboration with Simone and Gaetano Cantoni on the construction of Palazzo Ducale. The building was completely rebuilt, with its axis shifted to via Balbi, where a large double-height entrance atrium with a terrace of considerable size was opened. In correspondence with the new atrium, a section of monumental staircase was also built, flanking the existing one and replacing it in its original role of representation and access to the piano nobile. Petondi's interventions can also be seen in the decoration of the *façade* and the interiors, which, although reproduced after the war, can be traced back to Rococo forms based on models that were still present in the decoration of the rooms at the time. The characteristics of the new 18th-century building are recorded in sources dating back to 1780, in the Guides of the painter and historian Carlo Giuseppe Ratti and in that of the so-called 'Anonymous of 1818'. Inherited by the Cattaneo della Volta family in 1776 (following the marriage between Maddalena Balbi and Giuseppe, son of Giovanni Battista), the palace was enriched inside with the family's important picture gallery, part of which still decorates some of the rooms.

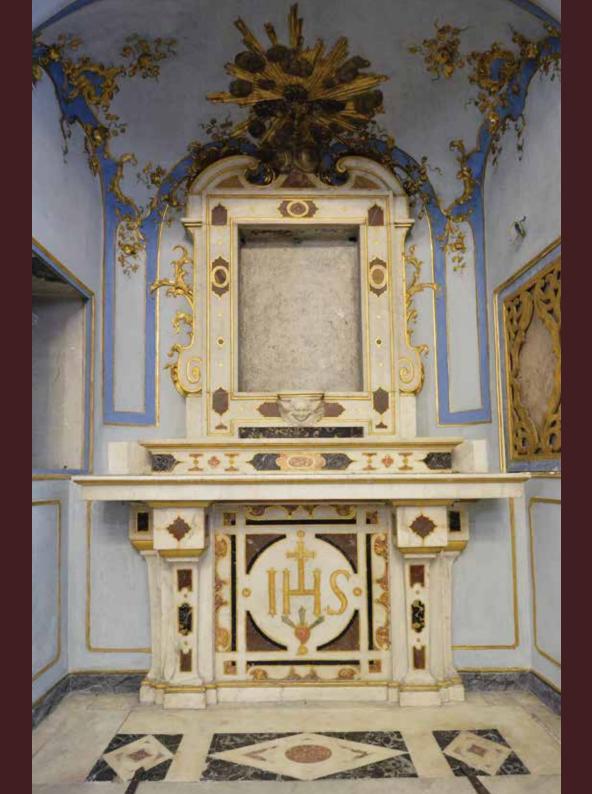
On the second floor is the hall, now the Aula Magna of the Faculty of Humanities, where five paintings, part of the Cattaneo Gallery in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, were returned in 2009 after a complex vicissitude – theft in 1997 and partial recovery the following year – and duly restored. They are the *Portrait of Doge Giovanni Battista Cattaneo della Volta*, attributed to Gio. Enrico Vaymer; the *Portrait of Doge Nicolò Cattaneo della Volta*, attributed to a yet unidentified local artist of academic training; the *Portrait of Doge Cesare Cattaneo della Volta*, attributed to Pellegro Parodi; and the splendid Portrait of a *Lady of the House of* 

Cattaneo with her daughter, a work traditionally attributed to the brush of Mulinaretto, but recently correctly attributed to Gio. Enrico Vaymer. Above the entrance door, on the other hand, is a canvas depicting an unspecified biblical scene, attributed to Giovanni Andrea De Ferrari, and unfortunately very poorly painted. Finally, in the room adjoining the Aula Magna, there is a Flagellation of Christ, with accentuated chiaroscuro and Caravaggio-like touches, which, on the basis of useful comparisons with very similar sketches, is definitely attributed to Gio. Domenico Cappellino. In the beautiful 18th-century cartouches that decorate the room, unfortunately orphaned by another part of the ancient collection of paintings, some of the restored canvases from Palazzo De Ferrari Chiavari Belimbau have recently been placed - with appropriate passepartouts to indicate their grafting - to give the room a memory of the original decorative emergencies. In the same room, on the left wall, there is a *prie-dieu* inserted in a recess decorated in the centre with the dove of the Holy Spirit, while on the vault there are some leaves and *rocaille* frames in gilded stucco; these motifs are repeated on the two wooden doors that, when closed, cover the recess, and propose the same colour scheme as the walls. The altar, in white Carrara marble with gilded profiles, decorated with geometric inlays in polychrome marble, is older than the decoration of the recess and the doors closing it, and can be dated from the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The decorative scheme, linked to the interventions of the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and partially reinstated during the restoration after the war damage, can still be seen in the various rooms of the piano nobile, the second floor and the mezzanines, in an exercise of variations on the theme of 'rococo' forms, adopted from time to time according to updated patterns

and motifs. In the large room currently occupied by the Presidency of the School, which opens to the outside with a panoramic balcony overlooking Piazza della Nunziata, the gilded stucco decoration is made up of folders with curls and scrolls from which roses emerge, elements that also decorate the frames of the three mirrors on the walls. Angular stuccoes with golden roses on a background of various shades of green are also found on the vault and on the thin cornice separating it from the walls, where four musical trophies held by a ribbon descend in rectangular spaces. Today, all that remains of the 16th and 17th century decoration is the beautiful image of Christ the Redeemer, placed in a recess above the door of the main hall, which recent studies have attributed to the Genoese sculptor Gian Giacomo della Porta. In the 18th century the palace was bought by Giovanni Battista Negrotto and after his death it was sold to the Figoli family, who owned it until 1937, when the last heirs sold it to the Società Italiana Levante Assicurazioni. After the war, the latter undertook a major restoration project under the direction of the architect Luigi Carlo Daneri, who, between 1947 and 1949, repaired the damage caused by the bombing and reconstructed what had been irreparably destroyed. In the work of reconstruction and partial restoration of the building, Daneri tried to respect the characteristics of the pre-existing architecture in order to make the building recognisable as a 17th-century residence, of 16th-century origin and renovated in the second half of the 18th century. All this was possible thanks to the use of precious materials and highly skilled and experienced craftsmen, who were able to use traditional techniques and follow contemporary models, working with marble, slate, plastic stucco decorations, gilding, and murals.

In 2001, the University of Genoa acquired ownership of the building and, after conservative restoration work and adaptation to new uses, the building was opened to the activities of the Faculty of Humanities, joining the other two Balbi residences that are side by side along the same street axis.



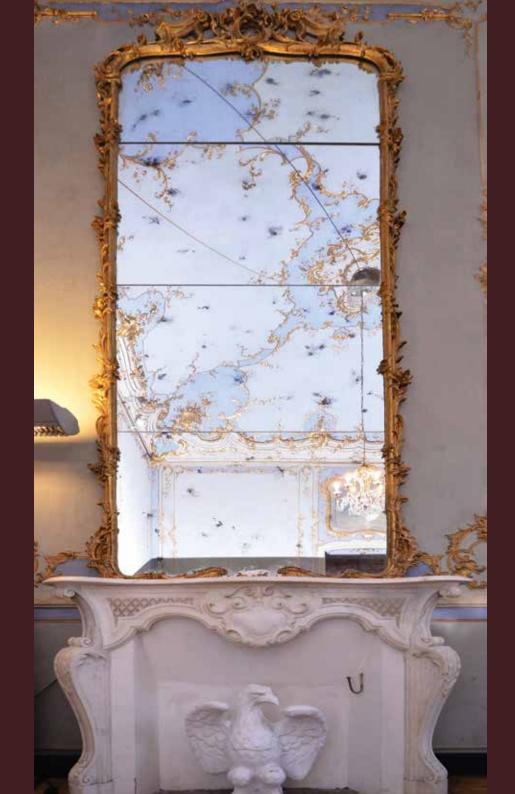






















## Palazzo De Ferrari Chiavari Belimbau

2 Piazza della Nunziata

At the beginning of 1609, the construction of the building facing the Annunziata's Church had almost reached the point of completion when the owner and promoter, Francesco Ferrari, made his will on 20 January. Although he had been married to Delia Giustiniani di Galeazzo since 1582, De Ferrari, who had no direct heirs, had established a primogeniture in favour of his nephew Marc'Antonio, the son of his sister Cornelia and Battista Chiavari, to whom the palace was to be bequeathed with a congruent income. Moreover, perhaps to please his wife, in 1611, shortly before his death, De Ferrari decided to bind the inheritance of the palace to the marriage of Marc'Antonio Chiavari to Zenobia Giustiniani, daughter of Delia's brother Cesare. These are undoubtedly signs of the high value that Francesco De Ferrari ascribed to his splendid new palace, as can be seen from another passage in his will of 1609, in which he forbids clearly, that it should never be sold or mortgaged while he decreed that all his other movable and immovable property should be auctioned.

The quality of the building and the uniqueness of the decorations contributed to the fact that in 1614 it was included in the first class of public lodgings, that is, it was considered worthy of receiving princes, ambassadors, and

other illustrious personalities, even if it was still remembered as the only residence of the late Francesco De Ferrari. The acquisition of the property by the Chiavari family must therefore have taken place between 1614 and 1664, and probably between the second and third decade of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The subsequent changes of ownership have not yet been fully clarified, but in the Rolli of 1664 the palace, now down to the second class, perhaps due to the alienation of the collections by the heirs, seems to belong to Batta Chiavari, descendant of Geronimo, second son of Cornelia Ferrari Chiavari.

Another change of ownership took place in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century: Carlo Giuseppe Ratti reported in 1780 that the palazzo now belonged to Andrea Cambiaso, adding that «it is now being enlarged and embellished with a new *façade*» [Ratti 1780]. After Andrea's death (1795), the building passed to his sister Marina, wife of Giovanni Battista Negrotto, whose coat of arms was added to that of Cambiaso in the hall adjacent to the main hall on the piano nobile. Finally, in 1890, the building was acquired by the Cohen family and passed on by inheritance to the Belimbau family. Damaged during the Second World War and then used as offices, it was finally donated by the Belimbau heirs to the University of Genoa, which is currently restoring it.

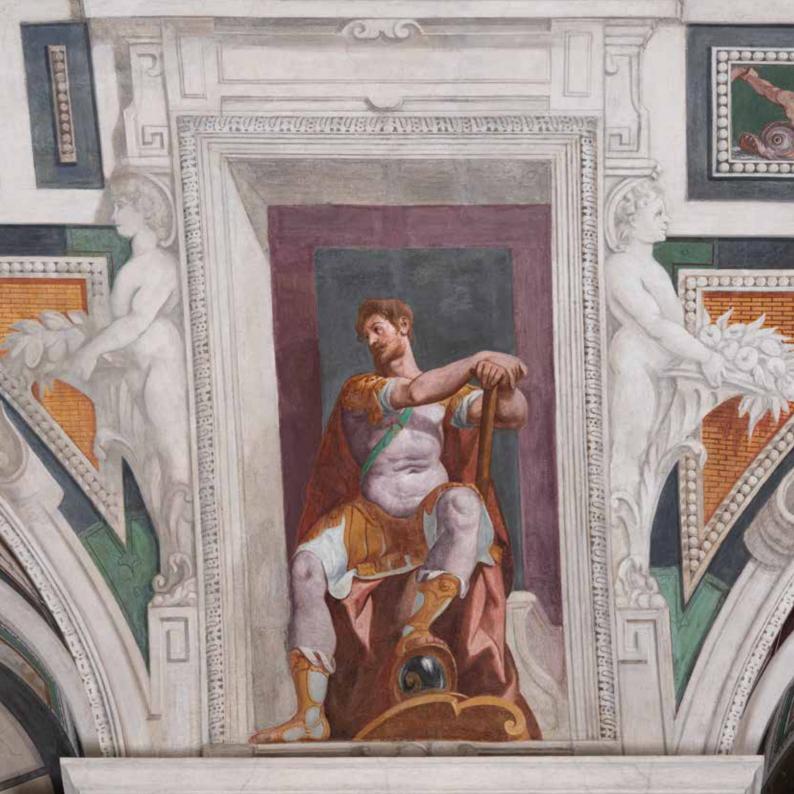
The restoration of the building at the end of the  $18^{\text{th}}$  century, commissioned by Andrea Cambiaso, was the work of the Ticino architect Giambattista Pellegrini, who gave the palazzo the appearance it still has today: the *façade* was redesigned in neoclassical style, the ashlar on the first floor was removed and pilasters were added to emphasise the scansion. The interior also underwent changes and additions, which continued throughout the  $19^{\text{th}}$  century, although they were not completely resolved.

However, the real historical and artistic treasure of the palace is the fresco decoration of the interior, commissioned by Francesco De Ferrari as a celebration of the glory of his homeland and his family. The complex decorative cycle, which includes the vaults of the atrium on the ground floor, the staircase, the antechamber, and the salon on the piano nobile, was entrusted to the famous painter Lazzaro Tavarone, a pupil of Luca Cambiaso. It was probably completed in 1610. The other rooms have vaulted ceilings decorated with 18th- and 19th- century monochrome, polychrome, and gilded stuccoes from the period of the restoration commissioned by Andrea Cambiaso. The room next to the hall is more heavily decorated with high-relief figures in stucco holding the coats of arms of the Negrotto-Cambiaso and Negrotto-De Mari families: a work that can be dated to 1824, the year in which the wedding of Giovan Battista Cambiaso Negrotto, Andrea's nephew, and Giovanna De Mari was celebrated.

The narrative entrusted to the frescoes begins in the vault of the entrance hall, where a large painting depicts Cleopatra on the boat to meet Marc Antony, according to the classical source of Plutarch's *Lives*. Grotesques, small

panels with mythological love scenes, cornucopias and playing cupids give the whole a festive appearance. All around, in false recesses, are eight seated figures of armed men, some with batons, whose varied faces suggest a gallery of family portraits, but are now unrecognisable. The Plutarchian story continues in the vault of a room on the main floor, later incorporated into the left staircase, where a fresco depicts The meeting of Cleopatra and Marc Antony. The fresco could recall a wedding scene, and perhaps in this event – of which only the positive aspects are described in detail - we can read the wish of Francesco De Ferrari and Delia Giustiniani for the union of their grandchildren Marc'Antonio, the heir, and Zenobia Giustiniani. The depiction of Cleopatra's stories had a certain literary and artistic success in Genoa in the second half of the 16th century, but interest was mainly focused on the dramatic aspect of this story, which ended with the queen's suicide.

On the piano nobile, an entrance hall decorated with grotesques depicting allegorical female figures of virtue, very common in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, leads to the Great Hall. The decoration of this room has an extraordinary decorative layout that begins on the walls, where mock twin columns mark the perimeter, imagined as a loggia opening onto seascapes. To the east, a couple, perhaps representing the owners of the house, watch the arrival of two boats against the backdrop of Mount Portofino. To the west, a Doge, perhaps identified with Gio. Luca Chiavari (Doge in 1627-1629) receives the homage of a personage against the background of the Lantern, the lighthouse of Genoa and symbol of the city. It is probable that the decoration of the walls had not been completed when Francesco De Ferrari died (1611), whose coat of arms ap-



pears in the architrave just above the Doge scene, while that of his wife Delia Giustiniani De Ferrari is painted on the opposite wall. The new owners, the descendants of the Chiavari family, perhaps wished to commemorate the attainment of the highest office of the Republic in their sumptuous new residence.

Above the monumental false columns, the illusion continues with the creation of an architrave on which, in informal and amused poses, pairs of half-naked natives with feathers and solid gold ornaments, armed with bows and arrows or engaged in work, sit. In these figures, for which numerous study sheets have survived, Tavarone brought to bear all his anatomical skill and imagination, as well as his rather deep knowledge of the most curious aspects of Indian customs (such as the splendid feathered hairstyles or the presence of parrots brought as gifts to the Spanish royal family), which he had witnessed at first hand during his journey through Spain with Luca Cambiaso.

In the vault, the large 'reported painting' of *Isabella of Castille and Ferdinand of Aragon receiving Christopher Columbus on his return from the New World*, damaged during the Second World War, is surrounded by a rich decoration in which, in panels and folders resting on the corbels of the vault, are real portraits of the protagonists of the story, seated in active dialogue and qualified by attributes and coats of arms that, together with their clothing, have allowed them to be identified. They are in fact the royal couple Isabella and Ferdinand, Christopher Columbus and his brothers Bartholomew and Diego, the two Caribbean '*cacicchi*', Guacanagarì and Caonabò, and the latter's wife, Queen Anacaona. The twelve lunettes under the vault represent episodes from the navigator's first voyage, which culminated in the discovery of America. In the corners there are four globes with the terrestrial, southern and boreal hemispheres, the corresponding celestial hemispheres, and the signs of the zodiac. The Admiral's *Log* is illustrated here with extraordinary care by Tavarone, who undoubtedly follows a precise wish of the commissioner, contributing with his style and taste, still of the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, to give the representation the liveliness of a chronicle, in which purely narrative episodes, such as *The departure from Palos*, alternate with solemn moments, such as the lunette in which *Christopher Columbus and his commanders take possession of the new land*, or dramatic ones, such as the terrible storm that caught them on the return journey.

It was in Genoa, more than a century later, that the great navigator's achievement was first celebrated in an explicit and monumental way. This was at the behest of a wealthy family belonging to the 'new aristocracy', who had no illustrious ancestors to glorify, but who made civic glory their own. Convinced republicans, also known as 'republicanists' because of their fierce defence of the political autonomy of the state against both Spanish and French interference, supporters of naval rearmament and, in general, of the seafaring destiny of the Republic, they saw in Columbus the model of the Genoese self-made man, capable of achieving honour and glory through virtue rather than wealth.





















## Palazzo Rebuffo Serra

2 Piazza Santa Sabina Faculty of Humanities – Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures

In the area near the northern tower of Porta dei Vacca, the presence of members of the Rebuffo family, belonging to the 'new' nobility, is attested from the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, registered in the Giustiniani Hotel in 1528. In 1509 Pantaleo had a house near the tower, for which his son Pellegro in 1530 obtained permission from the Padri del Comune to close the portico and extend the terrace. In the 17th century, after Bartolomeo Rebuffo had bought it, the northern tower of the medieval Porta di Santa Fede (known as 'Porta dei Vacca') was incorporated into the palace. His nephew Francesco enlarged the palace in 1663 and the following year it was included in the fourth class of Rolli Public Lodgings: it was considered worthy of being part of the State hospitality system, which included the most prestigious residences in the city. In the first half of the 18th century the palace was extended to the north, but it was not until the second half of the century that the architectural complex took on its definitive appearance, further enlarged by the new owner, the Marquis Giacomo Serra – a prominent figure in society at the time: senator, state inquisitor, chief syndicator of the Republic - who had bought it from the Rebuffo family. The reconstruction of the Residence, in keeping with contemporary taste, was

completed between 1780 and 1782, a date that is inscribed in the epigraph on the entrance portal in Piazza Santa Sabina, in which the patron refers to the residence as the common home of his sons (Liberorum unanimitati). Between the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the latter made it an important cultural centre, distinguished in the fields of politics, literature, and historiography (besides the most famous Gian Carlo and Gerolamo, the two eldest, Gian Battista, Francesco and Vincenzo, who was also Rector of the University, played an important role). The portal, characterised by a triangular tympanum and a frieze with two metopes with classical motifs strongly rooted in the local tradition of aristocratic residences, marks the *façade* that became the main *façade* during the restoration; at the same time, the façade of today's Via delle Fontane was enriched with a loggia at the level of the second piano nobile, while the façade of Via del Campo lost its importance. The complex reconstruction work was carried out by the architect Giovanni Battista Pellegrini, a native of Ticino, «one of those who, following in the footsteps of the immortal Tagliafichi, contributed to the renewal of the architecture of their homeland» according to Alizeri [1880]. Pellegrini is an interesting but little-documented figure, to

whom the 19th-century scholar also attributes the renovation of the Oratory of Death and Oration, which also overlooks Piazza Santa Sabina, and other important interventions such as the façade of Palazzo De Ferrari Chiavari Belimbau and the Gropallo 'casino' near the Carignano Bridge. In the same years, the interiors of the palace were decorated, with the Marquis Serra entrusting the most important parts to Carlo Giuseppe Ratti and Giuseppe Paganelli, an artist from Bergamo who spent most of his career in Genoa. In the main rooms of the residence, the most important scenes of the magnificent decoration of the Salone del Maggior Consiglio in the Ducal Palace, frescoed from 1702 by Franceschini with quadratures by Tommaso Aldovrandini and destroyed in a dramatic fire in 1777, were reproduced. Ratti, who was also in charge of the pictorial part of the restoration of the hall destroyed by the fire, chose for the vault of the central hall on the second piano nobile, in agreement with the owner, an episode that was considered emblematic of Genoese generosity: The liberation in 1383 by Doge Leonardo Montaldo of Jacopo Lusignano, who had been imprisoned in Genoa for ten years with his family, to whom the Kingdom of Cyprus was returned; Franceschini, following a strict iconographic programme established by the patrons, illustrated the scene «in the middle of the main wall» [Alizeri, 1880] of the Doge's Palace hall. Signed and dated 1781 and placed in a pictorial structure rooted in 16th-century tradition (completed by plastic ornamentation executed, according to Alizeri, by Carlo Fozzi, in fact an erroneous transcription for Carlo Luca Pozzi, who was working at the same time on the construction of the Doge's Palace), the symbolic embrace between the Doge and Lusignano in the Serra Residence becomes the culmination of a more articulated narrative path. Four smaller paintings illustrate the events that affected Cyprus, a trading colony of the Genoese, in the years immediately preceding the event depicted in the centre of the vault: the massacre of the Genoese at the instigation of the Venetian Consul (1372); the announcement of the massacre to the Doge Domenico Fregoso; the following year, the capture of Famagusta and the conquest of the whole island by the Genoese; and, finally, the scene of the triumph of Pietro Fregoso and Domenico Cattaneo Della Volta, classically depicted with the figure of the captive Lusignan in front of the quadriga of the triumphants. The repetition of a scene from the lost cycle of the Ducal Palace also characterises the vault of the adjoining room, where the The storming of Jerusalem is depicted in an oval, a faithful copy of the one painted by Franceschini on the vault of the Salone del Maggior Consiglio, of which a preparatory sketch remains in the museum of the Ligustic Academy of Fine Arts. The heroic deed of Embriaco, which was decisive for the victory of the First Crusade and celebrated by Tasso in Jerusalem delivered, had a considerable iconographic fortune in the decoration of the Genoese palaces between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, and was also placed in a prominent position in the context of the frescoes prepared by Giovanni Battista Carlone for the Doge's Chapel, an official review of the civil and religious glories of the city. Giuseppe Paganelli, who had moved to Genoa because of a «fatal accident» at home, was entrusted with the execution of the scene, which inherits from the Franciscan model the strong foreshortening linked to the original location. It was the building site of Palazzo Serra, where he was employed in 1781, that marked the first definite presence of the Bergamasque artist in the city, where he worked for four decades. The third room of the second piano nobile, which



opens on the opposite side of the central room, has a frescoed vault that could also be attributed to Ratti, as suggested by Alizeri; the paintings, however, seem to show a more significant intervention of collaborators in the execution. Independently, in this case, from the model of the destroyed cycle in the Doge's office, they illustrate - as indicated in the 1846 Description of Genoa and Genoese territory - the exploits of a historical member of the family, General Gian Francesco Serra, who served the Spanish Crown in positions of responsibility. In particular, in the centre, there is a depiction of an episode in which Serra was a protagonist during the siege of Casale in 1640, when he defended the bridge over the Po River to the bitter end, retreating last, so much so that when he received the order to cut the ropes of the bridge, he, who had not yet escaped, fell into the river. Still on the second piano nobile, a smaller corner room, adjacent to the The storming of Jerusalem, has a mythological depiction on the ceiling, dominated by the figure of Jupiter, also attributed to the same building site; while the vault of the next room is characterised by a beautiful plastic decoration in a more exposed neoclassical style, with monochrome medallions in the corners with putti figures symbolising the four seasons; the two following rooms are similarly characterised in terms of taste. Finally, there is an interesting fresco decorating the ceiling of a small, refined, circular library in the tower incorporated into the palace, in which ancient shelves are still preserved, perhaps to be identified with the «small salon of the tower» mentioned by Belgrano [1859] in his biography of Gerolamo Serra. The allegorical and mythological figures - easily recognisable personifications of the four seasons; the image of Apollo piercing a young woman recalls the episode of the murder of Coronides, who had betrayed him with Ischi (Ovid, Metamorphoses, II, 531-632), confirmed by the presence of the raven bearing the news of the betrayal, whose white feathers were darkened by the god as punishment - stand out against the blue light of the sky, without dividing the space into panels. Compared with the Reception Rooms, the construction and orchestration of the figures here are more directly related to the second piano nobile, to the great Genoese decoration of the Baroque matrix in its latest declinations. The debt to earlier models, such as the frescoes by Domenico Parodi, is evident, for example, in the solution of the oval dome with images of putti. If this fresco is also attributed to Ratti, as seems possible, the greater continuity with the local pictorial tradition should be emphasised. According to sources, at the foot of the staircase there were two large statues of angels by Daniele Solaro, which have recently been returned to their place of origin, the San Lorenzo Cathedral. In 1950 the building was bought by the Mutuamar Maritime Insurance Company, which used it as an office building until 1986, when it was bought by the University, which turned it into the seat of the Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literature (now the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature). The southern *façade* of the building has undergone extensive restoration work in 2003-2004 on Via del Campo, while a major restoration of the *façades* facing Via delle Fontane and Piazza Santa Sabina has just been completed (2023).









## Albergo dei poveri

2 Piazzale Emanuele Brignole Faculty of Social Sciences

In 1653, the small valley of Carbonara, behind the centre of Genoa, was chosen as the site for the Cyclopean factory of the Albergo dei Poveri: a gigantic citadel of charity - as it was understood at the time - which, in its early stages, from 1655 onwards, was largely financed by the commitment and income of the nobleman Emanuele Brignole. The complex was conceived as a grandiose quadrilateral intersected by a cross, with the church dedicated to the Immaculate Conception at its centre. The enormous cost of the construction, which was financed entirely by charitable bequests deposited in the Banco di San Giorgio and by private donations, prolonged the work for more than two centuries. In the middle of the 19th century, the socio-cultural conditions of the city changed radically and the Albergo was left unfinished for at least half of its western wing.

Although the Albergo is still the largest building in the city, it is in the main body of the building that the greatest artistic qualities have been preserved, capable of standing up to the monumentality of the architecture. In fact, in 1671, the Lombard stucco artist Giovanni Battista Barberini was commissioned to create some cyclopean stucco statues in the colossal staircase leading to the upper atrium, to represent the most generous financiers who, with their legacies, had made it possible to carry out this enormous project. An eloquent example is the statue of Angelo Giovanni Spinola, one of the richest Genoese of the second half of the 16th century and owner of a large palace in Strada Nuova: one of his donations to the poor, left to mature in the Banco di San Giorgio, made it possible to start building the Albergo, and that is why Barberini portrayed him with a plan of the building. As most of the original plans have been lost, Angelo Giovanni Spinola's plan remains the oldest representation of the building as it was originally conceived: a work of art that also serves as archival documentation. But Barberini's work did not stop there: while in the staircase the sculptor created effigies of past benefactors, in the upper hall he focused on the contemporaries of the Albergo's founder, Emanuele Brignole. Among the statues of Giacomo Filippo Durazzo, Franco Borsotto and Francesco Granello, the most spectacular is certainly the one dedicated to his cousin: Marquis Anton Giulio Brignole Sale. The son of a Doge, a great man of letters, ambassador and politician, a few years after the death of his beloved wife, Paola Adorno, Anton



Giulio renounced his possessions and titles to become a preacher of the Society of Jesus. And this is how Barberini depicts him: in the pose of an orator, in the act of listing the points of a sermon on his fingers, dynamically projected towards the centre of the room, with the robes of a Senator of the Republic thrown in a heap at his feet. In short, very different from the refined gentleman we can admire in the collections of the museums of the Strada Nuova, in the wonderful portrait painted of him by Antoon Van Dyck in the 1720s. Memories of extraordinary artistic quality, immortalised in marble, are also those dedicated by the Carrara sculptor Giacomo Antonio Ponzanelli to Marc'Antonio Grillo and Lavinia Centurione Grimaldi in 1683 and 1720 respectively. Today, it may seem contradictory to commemorate the charity of wealthy Genoese patricians with colossal statues, busts, and ceremonial apparatus worthy of an aristocratic palace. These monumental elements, intended to perpetuate the memory of the donors and proportionate to the size of the legacies, were, on the contrary, programmatic from the very beginning of the complex: they were intended to stimulate the practice of donation by the aristocracy, which sought every means to commemorate its prominence in public space. Emanuele Brignole, on the other hand, never wanted to be portrayed inside the grandiose complex. Only after his death the painter Gio Bernardo Carbone create an iconic portrait of him, while in the 19th century a marble statue of him was added to those in the monumental atrium. His memory, however, would live on, above all through the amazing works of art he donated to decorate the church, the true physical and spiritual centre of the Albergo. In fact, in August 1666, the accounts show that the sculptor

Pierre Puget of Marseilles was commissioned to create a marble work to be placed on the high altar. The sculpture was not actually delivered until five years later, in 1671, and its formal characteristics and stylistic choices are surprising. In the pure, unadulterated white of the dome, Mary is carried towards heaven with her arms outstretched, while the breath of a warm Baroque wind swells her garments. An Immaculate that almost takes on the iconographic features of the Assumption, mediated by Puget's wonderfully dreamy language. Of exceptional quality, albeit later, is the large altarpiece on which the French artist's sculpture now stands. In the first half of the 18th century, it was the Genoese Francesco Maria Schiaffino who created this wonderful example of late Baroque sculpture: the marble becomes soft flesh in the putti fluttering on the sides of the altar, while the monumental structure projects the Immaculata ever higher, towards the light raining down from the dome inside the church. In addition to the exceptional nature of its artistic decoration, the church is also the physical and architectural meeting point of the areas of the whole complex: from the various oratories opening onto the presbytery area, the guests of the establishment, strictly divided into men, women, and inpatients, could attend services. In fact, the church of the Albergo was always a space open to the city, a true parish church, open to the public for the celebration of Mass. It was in the presbytery, facing the side occupied by the men's wing, under an unmarked tombstone, that Emanuele Brignole wished to be buried, in an extreme gesture of humility.

The 're-education' function conceived for the great complex was explicitly directed towards the poor, but also towards orphans, single women, the sick and the



crippled: in short, it included all the weak and, unfortunately, undesirable categories of the triumphant society of the Siglo de los Genoveses, whose extraordinary economic, cultural, political and artistic successes are all too often glorified, but very little is examined from the point of view of the less well-off classes. And yet the chronicles of the time tell us explicitly that between the 16th and 17th centuries Genoa was the European city that best understood the unbridgeable abyss that opened between the infinite mass of the many poor and the few, very rich aristocrats. A social inequality that was reflected in the creation of places like this, where men like Brignole, with a rich and philanthropic vision of the world, no doubt wishing to do good, thought of segregating for re-education all those who were not perfectly integrated into society.

Today, the role of the Brignole Institute, which looks after and comforts the elderly in particular, in a genuine work of charity and social commitment, is quite different. However, we cannot be too harsh in our judgement of the genesis of this complex: the 17<sup>th</sup> century was a time of profound contradictions, a historical moment of great change in which it is difficult to make clear distinctions between good and evil, between the wonderful and the terrible. The same could be said of the figure of Emanuele Brignole: a modest philanthropist dedicated to the care of his fellow citizens, but whose money, like that of most Genoese, came from the exploitation of the transoceanic routes that brought to Europe the colossal quantities of silver plundered in the New World.

Based on a programmatic agreement signed in 1991, between 1994 and 1995 the University began the first refunctionalisation works, initially concentrated on the first floor with the restoration of the former *Oratory of the Dames*, now the *Aula Magna*, and the creation of four new classrooms for the Faculties of Law and Political Science. Between 1998 and 2001, a series of further works were carried out, leading to the construction of additional classrooms on the ground floor, while the University's presence in the hotel coexisted with the maintenance of social activities, albeit disused and gradually relocated. Finally, in 2001, the final deed of transfer of surface rights was signed between the University and the Brignole Institute, initiating the planning and execution of the works for the global and definitive re-functioning of the entire complex, which is currently nearing completion.













## Villa Giustiniani Cambiaso

1 Via Montallegro Polytechnic School

Designed in 1548 by the Perugian architect Galeazzo Alessi, the compact and powerful building, which stands on a high basement that also helps to separate it conceptually from the ground, was built on the edge of a small valley that dominates the landscape sloping down along the sea-mountain axis: a location that places the villa in the double panorama, in a virtuous and innovative combination, the result of a close relationship between the client's desire for magnificence and the architect's compositional ability. A reciprocal exchange that translated into architectural practice the antiquarian culture of Luca I Giustiniani, a member of the most cultivated aristocracy of the city and a refined collector, who wished to recreate, in the *otium* of vacation, the most suitable setting to represent his own image in a monumental key.

The client's desire was to have a luxurious and comfortable residence, but at the same time capable of translating his membership of the most elite cultural circles of the time into a courtly architecture, to be understood as a place evoking antiquity, where he could easily place the precious collection of pieces he had carefully selected, not only thanks to the family's commercial activities with the islands of the Mediterranean, but also through patient and meticulous research on the Roman antiques market. The educated and refined tools that the architect offered in response to these requests were his great capacity for design, the direct consequence of a strict logic of volume composition, and an architectural culture calibrated on contemporary treatises, on the study of the vestiges of the past, on the direct survey of the ruins of antiquity, but at the same time updated with the innovations of the Renaissance and Roman Mannerism.

The architectural and decorative typology that emerged, and the relationship it established with the landscape broke with traditional Genoese residential models, which were still tied to organic compositional concepts and less imposing typologies, so much so that in a few years it became a true paradigm of architecture, not only of the suburban villa but also of the city palace. A characteristic that was understood and appreciated by Pieter Paul Rubens, who, during a visit to the city at the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, wanted to include the Albaro residence, together with eleven other examples, in the first edition of the collection of reliefs dedicated to the *Palaces* of *Genoa*, published in Antwerp in 1622, and proposed as a repertoire of compositional models, dazzling examples



of «beautiful and comfortable buildings» that perfectly reflected the cultured circle of the «particular gentlemen» of Genoa [Rubens 1622].

A paradigm that had great success in the city and in the Genoa region until the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, becoming the leitmotif of the most important urban episode of the *Siglo de los Genoveses*, such as the opening of the Strada Nuova in the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, a building site where Alessi's innovative architectural solutions, already perceived by Vasari in the second edition of the *Lives* as residential realities of modern taste came to define the image of the city itself and its aristocratic class in Europe.

On the main *façade*, the austere classical language of the triple-arched opening, framed by the Doric semi-columns of the loggia overlooking the sea, enclosed between two closed avant-corps slightly protruding from the plane of the *façade*, is contrasted with the greater decorativism that characterises the upper register. Here, the huge order of composite pilasters divides the *aediculae*, whose crown, alternately curved and gabled, is surmounted by the mezzanine windows. The latter, in turn, are surrounded by a scroll motif whose phytomorphic elements recall the plastic richness of the frieze of vine leaves and grapes that characterises the entablature that runs seamlessly along the entire upper perimeter of the elevation. A decorative exuberance that is also found, reinforced, in the space of the upper loggia, reached by the wide staircase, whose space, starting from the atrium of the ground floor, leads to a first intermediate level lit by two large windows facing west, in a strict correspondence between inside and outside that sacrifices the potential greater monumentality of one of the secondary elevations to the compositional rules of the residence.

Alessi succeeded in qualifying the loggia gallery as a veritable *antiquarium* – a diaphragmatic space between the garden, the place par excellence for displaying the collection, and the residence – which, in a space open to the surrounding landscape but at the same time within the splendour of the residence, would present the collection as a mirror of the patron's culture. And it is precise-

ly this further representative space, reached at the end of the ascent inside the residence, that is configured as the barycentre of the visual sea-mountain duplicity: a veritable optical telescope that, passing through the salon and the diaphragmatic space of the loggia, hinges the mighty Alessian cube in the landscape.

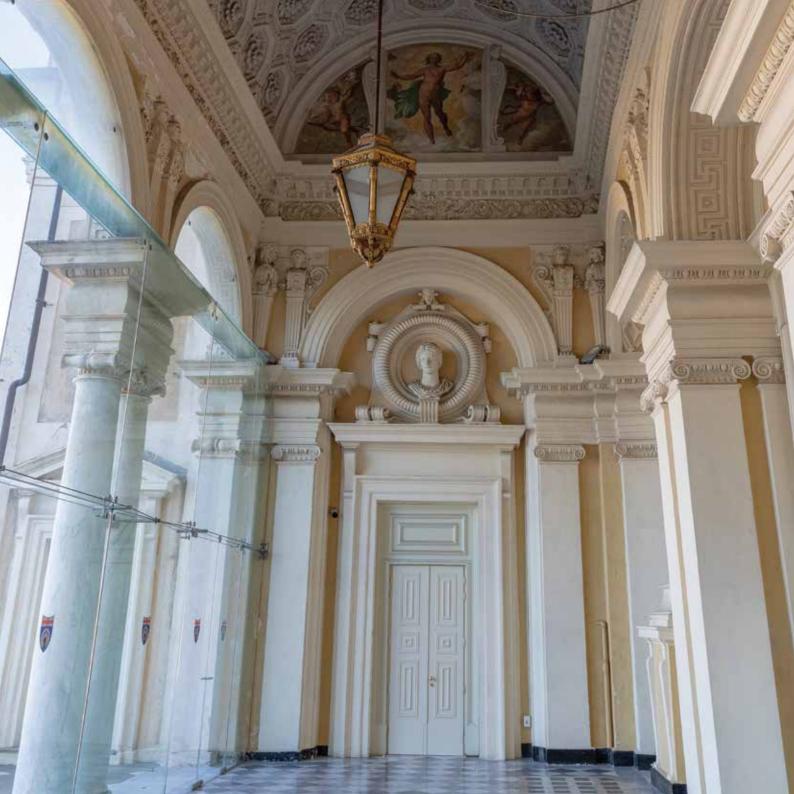
This solution, however, is already partially anticipated on the ground floor, where the atrium, in which four corbelled plinths hold ancient style half-busts, is also open to the loggia overlooking the sea, in direct correspondence with the garden uphill, through a central passageway covered by a barrel vault whose surface is marked by the tight rhythm of the lacunars. Alessio's cultivated building site, thus conceived, also gave substance to one of the most topical subjects, the object of study and debate of the educated humanist circles that were also emerging in the Genoese area: an initial, intense dialogue between architecture and painting. The two lunettes frescoed in the loggia by Luca Cambiaso and Giovanni Battista Castello, known as the Bergamasco, Diana-Moon to the east and Apollo-Sun to the west, thus debate the Vitruvian themes of the human figure set in space, themes that were the subject of contemporary treatises, of which the cultured architect-commissioner duo were certainly aware. The villa, which passed into the hands of the Municipality of Genoa in 1919, was the seat of the Regia Scuola Navale (Royal Naval School) and today houses the prestigious rooms of the Polytechnic School of the University of Genoa, in particular the engineering departments.





















## Santa Maria delle Grazie's Church and Monastery

1 Via delle Grazie Infomus-Lab 'Casa Paganini' – Polytechnic School

In the area of the *Castrum Ianuae*, the first settlement of the city, not far from the Santa Maria di Castello's Church, stands the complex of Santa Maria delle Grazie, built in the middle of the 15<sup>th</sup> century for the canonesses of the Augustinian Order of the Lateran, which today houses the international research centre Casa Paganini-InfoMus, part of the Polytechnic School of the University of Genoa.

The result of multiple and layered architectural and decorative interventions, the building was severely damaged by the bombardment of Louis XIV in 1684, but the ruined rooms were quickly rebuilt. The Napoleonic suppression of the convent decreed the transfer of the nuns to the neighbouring Santa Maria in Passione's Church, now destroyed, and the abandonment of the rooms, which, with the definitive abandonment of the church in 1810, were used for inappropriate purposes until recently, with the acquisition of the building by the University in 1987. The restorations carried out for the occasion of the 'Genoa Cultural Capital 2004' have recovered the complexity of the decorative phases, which are now reappearing in a diachronic way, reconstructing the history of the building from the first fragments of the 15th century to the interventions of the 18th century.

In the case of the Santa Maria delle Grazie's monastery, the desire to meet the tastes of the time meant that, as was often the case in the past, structural and decorative changes were made to cover up previous solutions that were now considered anachronistic and obsolete.

On the contrary, the restoration work has highlighted the peculiar coexistence of elements conceived at different historical moments, revealing the passage of historical events, but with a unique decorative choice: this contingency has become the main characteristic of the Santa Maria delle Grazie's complex, where in each room stylistic and iconographic motifs are juxtaposed, reflecting the cultural mirror of different epochs. The only one of the University's buildings with a specific religious function, the Santa Maria delle Grazie's complex necessarily differs from the others in terms of its patronage, the original use of the spaces and the choice of iconography.

The public church, built around the sixth decade of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, preserves its original architectural structure with a single nave and a presbytery over which is superimposed the 17<sup>th</sup> century fresco decoration, the result of an intervention in the 1780s, the last period of the work of Giovanni Andrea Carlone (1639-1697).



The Coronation of the Virgin, in the central bay of the vault, takes the form of a whirlwind of angels leading Mary, praying in the presence of God the Father and Christ, towards a heaven capable of breaking through the limits imposed by the architectural scores to enter powerfully into the space of the church and the hearts of the faithful. In relation to these solutions of strong illusionary effect, the presbytery functions as a kind of window on the past, in dialogue with the plastic apparatus attributed to Taddeo Carlone (1543-1613) and the paintings of Bernardo Castello (1557-1629). Although it belongs to the mature phase of the fresco painter, the arrangement of the decoration actually follows the 'reported painting' typology typical of the 16th and early 17th centuries in Genoa, where the frescoes, lacking any intrinsic three-dimensional spatiality, are conceived as panels rigidly surrounded by stuccoes.

The Marian theme, fundamental to the Tridentine light and specifically to the female vocation of the building, recurs as a dominant thread in the rooms, developing transversely through the different moments of the decoration and proposing, in this context, narrative episodes linked to the exaltation of the life of the Virgin and the infancy of Christ.

On the side walls, *The Birth of the Virgin*, *The Presentation in the Temple* and *The Visitation* are partially missing, while the *Marriage of the Virgin* mentioned by Soprani has been lost.

Recent restorations have revealed traces of the intervention of Valerio Castello (1624-1659) on the back wall, in the form of putti with *cartouches* which, although in a fragmentary state, show the exceptional stylistic signature of the Genoese artist and his distance from the manners of his father, Bernardo, who was still strongly attached to the 16<sup>th</sup>-century heritage.

Among the figures are the bishop's mitre and the baptismal amphora, references to the conversion of Saint Augustine, patron saint of the monastic order, whom Carlone also evokes in the first bay of the church as triumphant over heresy. The devotion to the saint from Hippo is also reflected in the walls of the adjoining chapel, with stuccoes depicting a mitre, a crosier, a book and a flaming heart, the usual iconographic attributes of Augustine, belonging to a late phase of the interventions and dated to the middle of the 18th century. The small room contains the tombstone of the Venerable Battistina Vernazza (1497-1587), a mystic and disciple of St. Catherine Fieschi, who entered the Santa Maria delle Grazie's monastery at the age of thirteen and lived there for a long time, devoting herself entirely to spirituality and contemplative silence. The frescoes decorating the room, embellished with rococo stucco, including two ovals with the portraits of Battistina and Caterina Fieschi, now almost illegible, are attributed to the Bolognese painter Jacopo Antonio Boni (1688-1766).

The rooms on the upper floor are also characterised by the usual overlapping of different decorative moments, on this occasion even further apart in time. In the *Hall of Landscapes*, the original 15<sup>th</sup>-century wooden ceiling can still be seen, as well as traces of black-and-white bands on which the new decoration of the early 17<sup>th</sup> century was based. Rural and maritime landscapes are depicted in a faux-architectural setting, in a game aimed at overcoming the structural limits of the wall and at the interpenetration of interior and exterior spaces typical of contemporary Genoese dwellings. The adjoining room



has a 15<sup>th</sup>-century cross-vaulted ceiling with a sunburst decoration, updated with frescoes, now very deteriorated, dating from the second or third decade of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. These include the *Assumption of the Virgin* on the vault and the *Flight to Egypt* on the right wall, which is in a fragmentary state.

The inner oratory, which gives access to the nuns'choir, echoes the typological layout of the presbytery by Bernardo Castello on the lower floor. Here, too, the frescoes, attributed to Giovanni Carlone (1584-1630), are set in contemporary stucco divisions, and again refer to stories from *The life of Christ and the Virgin*.

*The coronation* in the central octagon virtually refers to the solution by Giovanni Andrea Carlone, Giovanni's grandson, on the vault of the public church, located just below this room, but realised at least fifty years later.

The two artists approached the same iconographic motif in very different ways, a clear sign of the passage of time and the evolution of artistic language, which had now discovered the novelties of the illusionist breakthrough in the Baroque style. On the walls, also by Giovanni Carlone, are the *Four Evangelists*, characterised by the symbols of the tetramorph, *St. Christopher with Child Jesus*, the *Archangels Michael and Raphael* and *St. Hyacinth*.

The allegorical images placed between the stuccoes, some in monochrome, can be identified as *Faith*, *Justice*, *Hope* and *Temperance*, taken almost literally from Cesare Ripa's Iconology.

These figures are thought to have been painted by Andrea Ansaldo (1584-1638), whose physiognomic features are particularly recognisable in *Faith* and *Hope*, although not all critics agree.

This room leads to the nuns' choir, which was enlarged in 1584 compared to the 15<sup>th</sup>-century structure but was severely damaged in the bombing that exposed the roof in 1684, and was rebuilt and redecorated a few years later.

The decoration, mentioned in historical sources as the work of Giovanni Andrea Carlone, has recently been attributed to Giovanni Battista Resoaggi (1662-1732), a lesser-known Genoese painter of lesser intensity than Carlone. This room, which belonged entirely to the nuns, contains a cycle entirely dedicated to the theme of the *Immaculate Conception*, which was suitable for women and very popular in Genoa, especially after the Council of Trent.

The complete decontextualisation of the rooms, currently used as research laboratories by Casa Paganini-Info-Mus, should also allow us to reconsider the fundamental role that the decorative apparatus and the iconographies proposed played in the historical moment of production, in relation to the enjoyment of the nuns themselves, privileged observers of the frescoes.

In the vortex of history that seems to impregnate the very essence of the complex, the contrast between the equipment of the centre and the decorative solutions of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries only prolongs the chronological gap that runs like a red thread through the entire structure, bringing it up to the present and projecting it even further into the future thanks to the contribution of new technologies.













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# Palazzo Balbi Senarega

# Palazzo dell'Ateneo



Palazzo Balbi Senarega, atrium and courtyard with colonnade.



Valerio Castello, *Gallery of the Rape of Proserpine*, 1655.



Domenico Piola, *Apollo and the Muses*, c. 1670.



Palazzo dell'Ateneo, former College of the Society of Jesus, atrium.



Valerio Castello, *Allegory of Time*, 1659.



Valerio Castello, *Gallery of the Rape of Proserpine* (detail), 1655.



Gregorio de Ferrari, *Gallery of the Loves of the Gods* (detail), 1693.



Valerio Castello, *Allegory of Time* (detail), 1659.



Domenico Piola, *Apollo and the Muses* (detail), c. 1670.



Gregorio de Ferrari, *Gallery of the Loves of the Gods*, 1693.



Palazzo dell'Ateneo, staircase leading to the first floor of the loggia.



Palazzo dell'Ateneo, view from the first floor of the loggia.

# Iconographic index



Palazzo dell'Ateneo, Aula Cabella.



Giambologna, *Christ before Pilate* (detail), 1587-1590.



Giambologna, *Temperance* (detail), 1582-1587.



Domenico Parodi, *Madonna and Child*, 1709.



Palazzo dell'Ateneo, University Chapel.



Palazzo dell'Ateneo, Aula Magna.



Giambologna, *Charity* (detail), 1582-1587.



Palazzo dell'Ateneo, view from Aula Colombo.



Giambologna, *Ascent to Calvary* (detail), 1587-1590.



Paolo de Matteis, *Divine Wisdom surrounded by the Liberal Arts*, 1705.



Domenico Parodi, *St. Luigi Gonzaga and St. Stanislaus Kotstka with child*, 1709.

# Palazzo Balbi Cattaneo



Palazzo Balbi Cattaneo, view from via Balbi.



Palazzo Balbi Cattaneo, connecting ramp of the 18<sup>th</sup> century restoration.



Salone Maggiore, now Aula Magna.



Living room vault with phytomorphic stucco, late 18<sup>th</sup> century.



Marble fireplace, 19th century.



Phytomorphic stuccoes (detail), second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.



Mirror, late 18th century.



Gio. Enrico Vaymer, *Portrait* of the Doge Giovanni Battista Cattaneo Della Volta, 1691-1693.



*Prie-Dieu* on the floor of the Salone (now Aula Magna).



Phytomorphic stuccoes (detail), late 18<sup>th</sup> century.



Fireplace (detail), 19th century.



Gio. Enrico Vaymer, *Portrait of a lady* (Maria Maddalena Gentile Cattaneo Della Volta?) *with her daughter*, 1691-1693.

# Palazzo De Ferrari Chiavari Belimbau



Palazzo De Ferrari Chiavari Belimbau, view from Piazza della Nunziata.



Lazzaro Tavarone, *The Cacicco Guacanagari*, 1610.



Lazzaro Tavarone, *View of the Lantern with Doge Chiavari* (?), 1610.



Lazzaro Tavarone, *Ferdinand of Aragon*, 1610.



Lazzaro Tavarone, *Cleopatra* sailing towards Mark Anthony (detail), 1610.



Lazzaro Tavarone, *Christopher Columbus*, 1610.



Lazzaro Tavarone, *Queen Anacaona*, 1610.



Lazzaro Tavarone, *The Cacicco of Caonabò*, 1610.



Lazzaro Tavarone, *Cleopatra* sailing towards Mark Antony, 1610.



Lazzaro Tavarone, *The Spanish Royals greet Christopher Columbus on his return from the New World*, 1610.



Lazzaro Tavarone, Isabella of Castile, 1610.

# Palazzo Rebuffo Serra

# Albergo dei Poveri



Palazzo Rebuffo Serra.



Carlo Giuseppe Ratti (attr.), *Apollo and Coronide*, 1781.



Albergo dei Poveri, façade.



Albergo dei Poveri, view of one of the four courtyards.



Palazzo Rebuffo Serra, view from the tower towards the Darsena.



Carlo Giuseppe Ratti (attr.), *Apollo and Coronide* (detail), 1781.



Jacopo Antonio Ponzanelli, Marco Antonio Grillo, 1683-1684.



Giovanni Battista Barberini, *Anton Giulio Brignole Sale* (detail), 1671.



Library in the northern tower of Porta dei Vacca, Palazzo Serra. University Library of Genoa, Photographic Archives.



Jacopo Antonio Ponzanelli, *Lavinia Centurione Grimaldi*, 1720.



Giovanni Battista Barberini, *Angelo Giovanni Spinola* (detail), 1671.

# Villa Giustiniani Cambiaso



Pierre Puget, *Immaculate Conception* (detail), 1666-1671.



Pierre Puget, *Immaculate Conception*, 1666-1671; Francesco Maria Schiaffino, *Altar*, first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.



Galeazzo Alessi, *Villa Giustiniani Cambiaso*, 1548. View from the seaside.



Galeazzo Alessi, *Decorative masks* (detail), 1548.



Galeazzo Alessi, *Decorative* cornice of the mezzanine floor windows, 1548.



Galeazzo Alessi, *Decorative* elements of the string course frieze and corner solutions, 1548.



Galeazzo Alessi, *Loggia on the first floor*, 1548.



Galeazzo Alessi, *Decorative medallion with antique head*, 1548.



Galeazzo Alessi, *Small absis of the ground floor loggia*, 1548.



Galeazzo Alessi, *Villa Giustiniani Cambiaso*, 1548. View from the mountain side.



Galeazzo Alessi, *Decorative* elements of the vault of first floor loggia, 1548.

# Santa Maria delle Grazie



Luca Cambiaso, *Diana Night*, 1550.



The New Santa Maria delle Grazie. Nave of the church.



Bernardo Castello, *Presentation in the Temple*, c. 1600, presbytery.



Giovanni Andrea Carlone, *Viaticum of the Virgin*, c. 1680, nave of the church.



Giovanni Battista Castello 'of Bergamo', *Apollo Sun*, 1550.



Andrea Ansaldo, Faith, c. 1640.



Giovanni Carlone, *Coronation* of the Virgin, early 17<sup>th</sup> century, Oratory.



Giovanni Andrea Carlone, *Coronation of the Virgin*, c. 1680, church vault.



Research activities in the rooms of the convent.



Valerio Castello, Putti with cartouches (detail), first half of the  $17^{th}$  century, presbytery.

# Collana Genuense Athenaeum

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**Giacomo Montanari** is Researcher in History of Modern Art at the University of Genoa. His research interests range from the relationship between libraries and artistic production, to themes of Baroque painting and sculpture, related in particular to Giovanni Andrea Carlone, Tomaso Orsolino and Ercole Ferrata. He is Professor of Scientific Dissemination and Didactics of the Artistic Heritage and Scientific Curator of the initiatives for the valorisation of the UNESCO World Heritage Site *Genova: le Strade Nuove and the Sistema dei Palazzi dei Rolli*, and in particular the Rolli Days.

The University of Genoa, rooted in the heart of the city in the building designated in 1634 as the College of the Society of Jesus, has reinforced its presence among sites of great historical importance. The acquisition of Palazzo Balbi Senarega in 1972 was the prelude to the attainments of Palazzo Balbi Cattaneo, Palazzo Rebuffo Serra and Palazzo Belimbau, while since the post-war period the Villa Giustiniani Cambiaso has been destined for the University and, at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the great project for the reuse and restoration of the Albergo dei Poveri was in progress. An added value for students of all disciplines, from engineers to humanists, who are exposed to the extraordinary historical and artistic testimony of the monumental heritage during their studies at all levels. A value that is shared with the city, as many of these areas have been included in the UNESCO World Heritage List since 2006, within the site *Genova: Le Strade Nuove and the Sistema dei Palazzi dei Rolli*.

> On the cover: Valerio Castello, *Ratto di Proserpina* Palazzo Balbi Senarega, 1655

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