

DISCOVERING PALAZZO ALTEMPIS

Palazzo Altemps appears in the film for only a few fleeting seconds. However, it is one of the most fascinating and impressive examples of a noble residence recycled as a public museum.

This palazzo features late fifteenth-century frescoes (dating back to the time of construction under Cardinal Girolamo Riario) and a structure, architecturally speaking, which is fully in line with the purest Renaissance criteria of equilibrium. It also hosts the legendary collection of ancient sculptures of the Boncompagni Ludovisi princes. These many gods, fauns, Satyrs and Nymphs, and warriors – prototypically representing ancient ideals of beauty – were copied by renowned artists who came to Rome from all over Europe. Among the major masterpieces we have the Ludovisi throne, representing the birth of Venus, and the figures of Orestes and Electra, embracing as they take their leave of each other, and the Gaul Killing Himself.

However, the splendour of these sculptures and paintings also hides a tragedy, as a result of which Palazzo Altemps was considered for hundreds of years an accursed place.

Cardinal Altemps incautiously arranged for the marriage of his son, Roberto, with a member of the Orsini family. The Orsinis were the bitter enemies of Pope Sixtus V. Seeking vengeance, Sixtus accused Roberto of adultery and had him beheaded. Roberto's son wished to conserve the memory of this injustice, so he ordered a fresco for the palace's chapel to record for all time his father's execution.

For visitors

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