

# DISCOVERING PALAZZO BARBERINI

Palazzo Barberini was designed by Carlo Maderno, but the work was then completed by Gian Lorenzo Bernini with the participation of Francesco Borromini. This palazzo is the most impressive example of a residence in the Baroque style, blending elegance, stunning opulence and functionality.

To understand just how experimental this work was, we need only consider the two monumental stairways in the wings. The squared off and well lit stairway was designed by Bernini. The other stairway designed by Borromini features a dizzying spiral of steps. Pope Urban VIII Barberini was unconcerned over the costs of a stately home which would serve as a monument to his cultural achievements and his power. The splendid fresco by Pietro da Cortona - comprised of a lively dialogue established between pagan symbols and Christian allegories, and dedicated to the Triumph of Divine Providence - underscored the achievements of the Pope's government. This work rounds off an itinerary which includes the collection of the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica (with such marvellous works as the Narcissus, attributed to Caravaggio, and the portrait of Henry VIII by Holbein). In the film, "The Great Beauty", Paolo Sorrentino singled out Raphael's Fornarina (or Portrait of a Young Woman) for special treatment. Historians have found good reason to believe the woman portrayed was Margherita Luti, the daughter of a baker from Trastevere. She was considered the artist's official lover. On her left arm, the girl wears a bracelet with the name of the artist. The name means more than just an artist's signature; it also reflects a rather impish desire on the part of Raphael to stake his claim over this woman.

*For visitors*

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