



A brief historical background of the Palazzo

The first biographical information about the palace dates from 1498 when it was property of the great architect and artist Giuliano Giamberti, better known as Giuliano da Sangallo, who constructed it several years earlier for himself and for his family. At the time he was serving the Florentine aristocracy and needed a more convenient home and private studio to show his projects, including new techniques in stucco decorations that started to grace the Palazzo.

A memorandum dated 1510 refers to “numerous Roman antiquities” in the house. Vasari and other historians mention rooms containing works by Paolo Uccello and Botticelli.

In 1603 the palace was sold to Sebastiano Ximènes d’Aragona who hired Gherardo Silvani and his workshop to enlarge and embellish the building. Palazzo Ximènes remained for two centuries the property of this family, which had moved to Florence from Portugal, to become apart of the Grand Ducal Court of Tuscany, and were given the title of “Marchesi di Saturnia” as a reconnaissance to the large investments made by the family all over Tuscany.

In the second half of the 18th century the palace was rented by Ferdinando Ximènes to the Resident Minister of the French Republic. Before visiting the Grand Duke of Tuscany Ferdinando III, Napoleon Bonaparte - at that time general of the French army - spent the night in the Palace on June 30, 1796.

By 1816, for lack of male heirs, the palace was inherited by the sons of Ferdinando’s sister, Vittoria, who had married Niccolò Panciatichi, the heir of an important noble family from Pistoia which had moved to Florence in the 17th century.

At the end of the 19th century, the palace was restored by Marianna Panciatichi, the last of the family, married Paolucci delle Roncole and well known for her activity in natural sciences. She had a large wing overlooking the rear garden redesigned in 17th century style, much of which still remains today with tall trees and flower beds. The Panciatichi family line ended with her death, for lack of male heirs. The palace then passed to the Rabitti-San Giorgio family, then to the family Arrigoni degli Oddi (from Padoa) the last of which, Oddina, married Francesco Ruffo di Calabria, Prince of Scilla. From Oddina the palace finally passed to her daughter, the current owner, Isabella Fabrizia Ruffo di Calabria Becherucci.

The building suffered heavy damages during the 1966 flood of the Arno river, which caused the destruction of all the beautiful Venetian furniture of the ground floor.

In 2001-2002, on the occasion of a marriage in the family, and later from 2005 through 2007, the whole first floor along with the honour staircase were thoroughly restored. The central ballroom (176,000 sq ft x 330 ft height.) and all the adjacent rooms were returned to their original splendor with stucco work, decorations and colors of the 18th century. The structure was improved and made more precious by tapestries with coat of arms, old paintings, ancient busts, valuable pieces of furniture and authentic 18th century chandeliers and wall lamps.

The entire floor was divided into two parts, each one having its own separate entrance: the honour staircase along with the ballroom and the four adjacent rooms, and the remaining rooms, forming an independent flat, into where moved the owner’s family.

Taking advantage of the restoration work, the central ball room and some of the adjacent rooms, along with the underlying mezzanine, were upgraded to modern technologies in order to host various events, such as conventions, receptions, meetings, dinners, wedding parties etc., and were fitted with the necessary equipment, such as air conditioning, an efficient direct and indirect lighting system, 10 flushing lavatories, kitchen complying with the sanitary rules, service lift and locker rooms with lockers for the personnel, in order to optimize the logistic and simplify the catering operation. The whole structure complies with the safety rules. The ballroom can accommodate up to 210 people seated and many more, standing.