

PALAZZO MARTINENGO PALATINI

Located on the Western side of Piazza del Mercato, Palazzo Martinengo Palatini was built by Count Teofilo Martinengo III, between 1672 and the start of the eighteenth century, on the remains of the Gambara family's palace, and incorporates the remnants of a medieval tower. The project was entrusted to Lazzaro Bracco, the favourite architect of noble families at that time who also designed Palazzo Tosio Martinengo (now an art gallery) and Palazzo Martinengo delle Palle (where the headquarters of the architects' and lawyers' professional associations are now located). The finishings and stonework of the palace were entrusted to Bernardo Fedrighini, the architect who designed the façade of the San Faustino Church.

The halls of the "piano nobile", or main floor, (now the offices of the Rector of the University of Brescia) were decorated in 1714 by Giulio Quaglio, a master sculptor known all over Europe from Val d'Intelvi. Framed by very elegant stucco decorations, the wall medallions in the main hall depict Greco-Roman myths, while the ceiling portrays an allegorical narration of the glorious feats of Ercole Martinengo Palatini, an illustrious ancestor of the family.

The Palace remained property of Martinengo Palatini until 1874, when it was passed on to the Town of Brescia, which first used it to host the Food and Hygiene (respectively, *Annona* and *Igiene*) administration offices and then the Venturi Music Institute. In 1929, the ownership of this historic residence was transferred to the INAIL (National Institute for Insurance against Workplace Accidents), which radically transformed the wing overlooking Via Porcellaga. On such occasion, the road nearby was substantially enlarged according to the architect Marcello Piacentini's plans in order to elevate Palazzo Martinengo Palatini to a national monument. In the early 1930s, the Western façade and part of the side walls were endowed with Rationalist-monumental architectural traits and the octagonal spiral staircase was transformed by architect Carlo Calzecchi Onesti, Superintendent of the Monumental and Architectural Heritage of Milan.

In 1944, an air raid caused major damage, mainly to the old Southern building that faced the piazza. The building and the wall decorations in the main hall, which were later restored following the methods of Giuseppe Mozzoni. After the Second World War, master artists Vittorio Trainini and Lodovico Cominelli contributed to restoring the vaults in the secondary halls of the "piano nobile".

Il Salone dell'Apollo (The Hall of Apollo)

The Hall of Honour located on the main floor and in the centre of the Eastern façade of Palazzo Martinengo Palatini, probably owes its name to the fact that it was used as a concert hall of the Venturi Music Institute at the beginning of the twentieth century.

The floors are in the "seminato alla Veneziana" style made up of a base of marble powder on which marble granules of varying qualities and sizes are spread. The centre, on other hand, features a symmetrical "Palladian unit" made of the yellow Verona marble. The present flooring dates back to 1948, when it was restored after the damage incurred during the Second World War. The intricate pictorial decorations were the work of Giulio Quaglio (1668-1751), a famous painter born in Como who moved to Udine and worked in the province of Brescia, and have been conserved in the course of many restorations throughout the centuries.

The large medallion-shaped fresco at the centre of the ceiling depicts *The Receiving of Hercules (=Ercole) among the Council of the Gods*, which alludes to Ercole Martinengo's appointment as Count Palatine by the emperor Maximilian, who is portrayed in the garb of Jupiter and accompanied by the eagle of the Martinengo family's coat of arms.

The paintings on the side of the walls represent six episodes of ancient history related to the life of Alexander the Great based on the works of Quintus Curtius Rufus.