

# ROME

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*An Illustrated Guide to Its Monuments & Art*

## **Palazzo Venezia**

**From Rome with Love**

*Robert and Karla*

*Photographed on site · Notes compiled for viewing*

Plate 15

# Palazzo Venezia

*Location: Piazza Venezia, Rome*



*The grand two-storey Renaissance courtyard, with its travertine arcades and a garden of palms.*



*Mariotto di Cristofano, Virgin and Child with Saints (1420–30) — a gold-ground panel from the dawn of the Renaissance.*



*Giorgione, 'Two Friends' (c. 1502) — the enigmatic Venetian double portrait, a melancholy youth holding a bitter orange.*



*Giulio Carpioni, Bacchanal with Drunken Silenus (c. 1665) — a Venetian Baroque mythology in a carved gilt tondo.*



*An etched 16th-century suit of armour from the museum's arms collection.*

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### Description

One of the first great Renaissance palaces in Rome, and today a national museum of art from the Middle Ages to the Baroque. Behind its severe, fortress-like facade lie a garden courtyard ringed by elegant arcades and a sequence of grand halls hung with masterpieces. These views pair the architecture with a handful of the collection's highlights — a gold-ground panel from the 1420s, Giorgione's enigmatic double portrait, a Baroque mythological tondo, and a suit of Renaissance armour. The background below is drawn from the museum's own placards.

### Inscription & Translation

**No single inscription features in these views. The palace's name comes from its long service as the embassy of the Republic of Venice.**

*There is nothing here to translate, but the name carries its own history: from 1564 the building was the Venetian embassy, which gave both the palace and the square their name. In the 20th century its balcony over Piazza Venezia became infamous as the place from which Mussolini addressed the crowds.*

### Date & Age

Built from 1455 for the Venetian cardinal Pietro Barbo, who — once he became Pope Paul II in 1464 — enlarged it, making it one of the earliest Renaissance palaces in Rome. It was given to the Republic of Venice as its embassy in 1564, passed to Austria in 1797, and returned to Italy in 1916. The artworks shown span roughly 1420 (Mariotto di Cristofano) to about 1665 (Carpioni).

### Artist / Creators

The palace was begun for Cardinal Pietro Barbo (Pope Paul II), with later work by his relative Marco Barbo and Cardinal Lorenzo Cibo. Among the paintings shown are works by Mariotto di Cristofano (1395?–1457), the great Venetian master Giorgione (1477/8–1510), and Giulio Carpioni (1613–1678). The etched armour is 16th-century work; its maker is not recorded on the label shown.

### Significance

A palace that mirrors Rome's history. As a cardinal's and then a pope's residence it helped introduce Renaissance architecture to the city; as the Venetian (and later Austrian) embassy it gave the building and the square their name; and in the 20th century it became the headquarters of Mussolini's government, whose balcony over Piazza Venezia is one of the most charged sites of modern Italian history. Today it safeguards a rich collection — from gold-ground altarpieces and Giorgione's poetry of mood to Baroque mythologies and arms and armour.