

# THE PAINTING COLLECTION



Hall of the Age of Gold, with the oldest part of Palazzo Moroni's painting collection

Palazzo Moroni's painting collection includes about 50 works arranged in the rooms of the first floor in predominantly chronological order. The original part of the collection was assembled by Francesco Moroni (1606-1674), who also initiated the construction of the building: the precious art collection contributed to the prestige of the family and its residence. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the composition of the collection underwent a radical change. Pietro Moroni (1792-1858) wished to revive the family's glorious reputation through its nominal link with the celebrated Albinese painter, Giovanni Battista Moroni (1520/24-1579/80). The collection took on, therefore, a new and definitive organisation intended to make it famous. In 1817, Pietro acquired from Marcantonio Fermo Grumelli "four paintings by Moroni": *The Gentleman in Pink*, *The Portrait of Isotta Brembati*, *The Portrait of an Old Lady in Black*, and a final unidentified picture.



## DID YOU KNOW...?

The earliest evidence of the presence of paintings in the residence is a 17<sup>th</sup>-century manuscript which describes the arrangement of the collection room by room. Compiled on 28 September 1680, shortly after the death of Francesco Moroni, it lists all the moveable property that his sons, Alessandro, Antonio and Ludovico, would inherit. One hundred paintings are listed, most of which depict religious subjects. Aside from Borgognone and Bassano, no artists are mentioned.



Giovanni Battista Moroni, *The Gentleman in Pink* (detail), 1560, Lucrezia Moroni collection



Giovanni Battista Moroni, *Gentleman in Black* (detail), Milan, Poldi Pezzoli Museum



Andrea Previtali, *Virgin with Child and Donor* (detail), formerly in the Moroni collection

The **oldest part of the collection**, conceived by Francesco Moroni, aimed **to portray in detail the local pictorial tradition** and, through their portraits, to commemorate important members of the family.

It is interesting to see in the 17<sup>th</sup> century inventory the presence of **20 orange trees** as well, whose rarity made them an essential part of the collection; they were arranged in an internal space within the residence. A collection of essential oils, a great rarity in the Bergamo region, was also listed along with the paintings and musical instruments.

The collection entered its **high point in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century** with the acquisition of a collection of portraits by Giovanni Battista Moroni that is second only to that of the Accademia Carrara. In addition, it acquired important pieces from the Lombard Renaissance, works from the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, and a significant series of Milanese paintings from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Many connoisseurs, art dealers and art historians came to see the collection, including Charles Lock Eastlake (1854), one of those responsible for assembling collections for the National Gallery of London, and Bernard Berenson (1895).

During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, beset by the economic difficulties that hit all of patrician Italy after the country's unification, the family's patrimony began to be dispersed as a result of family and inheritance factors. After the deaths of the brothers Pietro (1880-1969) and Alessio (1876-1951) Moroni, **the heirs, Antonio, Elisa and Carlo, divided the moveable property into three parts.**

This division included the art collection from which many pieces were transferred to other residences, leaving those left in Via Porta Dipinta as a small token of a most illustrious past.



Giovanni Battista Moroni, *The Portrait of Isotta Brembati* (detail), Lucrezia Moroni collection



Giovanni Battista Moroni, *Crucifixion with the Virgin and St Ranica*, Church of the Seven Holy Martyred Brothers



Count Antonio Moroni (1919-2009), in an old photograph