

THE ARCHITECTURE



The façade of Palazzo Moroni

Francesco Moroni (1606-1674) commissioned the construction and decoration of this residence following his marriage to Lucrezia Roncalli in 1631. The works went on from the end of 1645 to 1655 on the site at “Porta Penta”, now Via di Porta Dipinta, that had been acquired by the Pesenti family in 1645; in 1648 a new part of the property was acquired from the Olmi family. The façade of the building is simple and austere, still showing the influence of the rigid dictates of post-Tridentine design. Its four floors respond to the slope of the street. Typical of private architecture of the period, the wall surfaces are simply plastered with sculpted stone elements: the large door, the balustraded balcony, the frames around doors and windows. The interiors are much more highly decorated. With respect to the original design, the most significant changes occurred during the first half of the 19th century, with the remodelling of the decorations of the mezzanine spaces, and then later, those of the main floor.



DID YOU KNOW...?

The C-shaped floorplan of the building is irregular in response to pre-existing elements on the site. Even the off-centre position of the entrance portal seems to result from this.

In Bergamo, generally, the scarcity of buildable land within the 16th-century enclosing walls meant that most 17th-century constructions were conversions of pre-existing buildings.



Bergamo Cathedral, with the Colleoni chapel, in an old photo



The Archive, managed by the Fondazione Museo di Palazzo Moroni



The Neptune courtyard by the stonecutter Lorenzo Redi

The construction site at Palazzo Moroni, along with that of the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore and Palazzo Terzi, provided a major impetus to the development of the baroque style in Bergamo. In the 17th century, property investment became less risky and more profitable so that urban palaces took on pronounced celebratory functions. At Palazzo Moroni, therefore, at the foot of the great monumental stairway (over the entrance door), the frescoes include an emblem that portrays a set of scales with the two pans in equilibrium, holding coins on one side and a building on the other, along with the motto AEQUA LANCE LIBRANDUM.

Palazzo Moroni was designed by the chief of works, the Luganese Battista della Giovanna (active in the Bergamo region from at least the 1630s) who produced around a set of ten drawings for the project. The Moroni archive, now on the ground floor of the Palazzo (managed by the Fondazione Museo di Palazzo Moroni), holds the accounts book compiled by this foreman which contains the list of expenses undertaken for the works. This documents are very important as they reveal in detail all the stages of the building's construction and decoration.

An internal courtyard opens behind the Palazzo's façade, embellished by the nymphaeum in a niche carried out by the stonecutter Lorenzo Redi (1626-1697) probably based on another artist's design, while the monumental statue of Neptune seems to be the work of a different, unknown, sculptor. The courtyard was re-structured during the 19th century: originally it would have been paved in fired brick with a well, two fountains and a stone trough with a figurehead for watering horses. Along the sides of the courtyard, at ground-floor level, there would have been service spaces.



The courtyard of Palazzo Terzi, in an old photo



A page from the accounts book held in the Moroni Archive



One of the Palazzo Moroni wings facing onto the courtyard