

PALAZZO LIVIANO

Located within Capitaniato Square, Palazzo Liviano is named after the great Roman historian Tito Livio, who was born in Padua and lived between the first century B.C. and the first century A.D. Palazzo Liviano was built according to the great Italian architect Gio Ponti, who also oversaw its furnishings.

THE FRESCO COMPETITION

Once built, Rector Carlo Anti focused on the decorative aspects of Palazzo Liviano. Announcing a public call in 1937, a competition to complete the fresco in the atrium was to commemorate Tito Livio by adhering to *the continuity of Roman culture in modern times through the exaltation of symbols of life and poetry, heroic virtue, study, and work*. The final selection of artists included Guido Cadorin, Massimo Campigli, Achille Funi, Ubaldo Oppi, and Mario Sironi. Achille Funi did not respond to the invitation, and Ubaldo Oppi presented his work after the deadline, eliminating him from the competition. The jury, composed of Carlo Anti, Gio Ponti, and Giuseppe Fiocco (professor of art history), first met on 15 April 1938 and again on 10 May of the same year. Massimo Campigli won the competition.

THE FRESCO BY MASSIMO CAMPIGLI

The fresco depicts a culmination of archaeology, focused on different moments. The right part of the main wall represents the academic world. The lower area celebrates research and archaeological exploration, while the upper section honours Tito Livio's intent to explain. The left side includes images of everyday people and children playing among the ruins while a poet draws inspiration. Above them, a crowd watches the lifting of a decorated column. The smaller wall shows workers using elaborate scaffolding to erect a concrete building on land rich in archaeological remains, while others are only intent on excavating. .

ARTURO MARTINI AND TITO LIVIO

Mario Bellini (1863-1946) bequeathed the financial resources to the University of Padua for a sculpture celebrating the great Roman historian Tito Livio. Leading up to the 2000th anniversary of Livio's birth, Arturo Martini constructed a sculpture for the atrium of Palazzo Liviano. The first draft of the piece took the form of a sculptural group but later featured Tito Livio alone. Martini produced two sketches, one of Livio standing alone and the other of him sitting alone, but the two options were far from the final piece. Martini would portray Livio bent over in reflection like "a child who kneels and writes all his life," according to the artist's definition.



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Tito Livio by Arturo Martini

Minor wall, fresco by Massimo Campigli

Tito Livio intent to explain



THE HALL OF THE GIANTS

The Hall of the Giants (*Sala Virorum Illustrium*) once stood as the main room of Carrarese Palace that featured a cycle of frescoes depicting illustrious figures, or giants, from ancient history. Prince Francesco I da Carrara commissioned the original design, but the layout and overall look of the hall have all but been lost. Those selected to be featured were entrusted to Francesco Petrarca (Petrarch) and later completed by Lombardo della Seta. Each of the depicted illustrious figures appears in the Latin prose written by Petrarch, *De viris illustribus*, which detailed a narration of their moral biographies.

THE FIRST CYCLE OF PORTRAITS

Painted between 1367 and 1379, the original cycle of frescoes included additional portraits of Petrarch and Lombardo painted between 1379 and 1388. Heavily retouched over the centuries, the southwestern corner image of Petrarch may represent the only fragment of the original 14th-century fresco. Those responsible for painting them include Altichiero, Ottaviano da Brescia, Guariento, and Jacopo Avanzi. There is some doubt about Guariento participating in the initial work, as he had died in 1369.

The 36 portraits of illustrious figures include four Roman kings, 24 men of the Roman Republic, five Emperors, and three non-Romans. Below each figure, a Latin prose inscribes a biographical event. Perhaps the works once included other historical scenes, but unfortunately, such information is limited. The conceptual value of the iconographic depiction was well-reconstructed thanks to its strong relationship with Petrarch's published work.

Carefully selected to celebrate a particular vision of history, the images and texts focus on examples of virtue (*exempla virtutum*). This cycle took on an ideological and political meaning, considered a self-celebration of those commissioning the work by placing themselves alongside such "giant heroes".

THE SECOND CYCLE

Toward the middle of the 16th century, the restoration of the Hall of the Giants greatly affected the architectural aesthetic of Carrarese Palace. Under the Republic of Venice (Serenissima), the building became a military command centre in Padua renamed *Palazzo del Capitano*. Between 1539 and 1541, Captain Girolamo Corner commissioned a new cycle of frescoes, still observable today. Painted by Domenico

Campagnola, the second cycle also includes the works of local artists such as Stefano dall'Arzere and Gualtiero Padovano and perhaps Giuseppe Porta Salviati and the Dutch painter Lambert Sustris.

The historical subject, the tripartite scheme, and the text included relate to the 14th-century cycle, but with significant variations concerning the selection of the original "giants". Accrediting Alessandro Maggi da Bassano with the iconographic selection in the second cycle of frescoes. The humanist Giovanni Cavaccia edited the *elogia* texts, transcribed by the calligrapher Francesco Pociviano, also known as *il Moro*.

The decor unfolds along the two main walls with a faux architectural structure marked by columns on high podiums surmounted by an architrave and a frieze with allegorical figures, heraldic crests, spirals, and grotesques. The space between each column is divided into several interconnecting registers. Along the lower area, a line of *tabulae* convey stories as *elogia*, surmounted by monochromes, share the exploits of each giant. The main area depicts fifty illustrious figures. Roman kings and emperors are located inside niches, while those from the Roman Republic are grouped upon an open background.

The two shorter walls, with three windows designed by Michele Sanmicheli, house the images of six humanists from Padua or those connected to Paduan culture. The frieze contains allegories with male figures on the west side and female figures on the east side, each flanked by heraldic crests and scrolls. The wooden coffered ceiling features medallions with portraits and panels with masks turn wheels enclosed within geometric frames.

The room aspires to celebrate the Venetian Republic (as a new Rome) by affirming its domination as bearers of peace, wellness, and prosperity thanks to its self-defined serene governance. Depicting classic and ancient traditions, the aristocratic and intellectual elements of Padua are shown through a historical context that emphasizes the University as the supreme cultural centre.

Eternally connected to the University of Padua, the hall held student dances and once stood as its main library. The Hall of Giants continues to represent one of the most prestigious spaces owned by the University, using it for important institutional events and concert performances.

The Hall of Giants



Marco Porzio Catone Uticense and Marco Porzio Catone Censore



Gneo Pompeo Magno, Lucio Cornelio Silla and Lucio Licinio Lucullo



Aulo Cornelio Cossio and Marco Claudio Marcello



Francesco Petrarca



Detail

