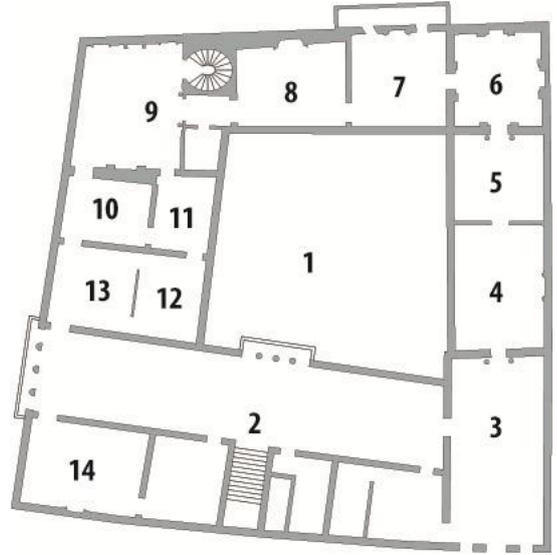


PALAZZO GRIMANI

at SANTA MARIA FORMOSA

1. Courtyard

The original palace, an ancient *casa da stazio*, was an L-shaped building located at the intersection of the rios of San Severo and Santa Maria Formosa. In the sixteenth century overall alterations were carried out for thirty years at the expense of Giovanni Grimani; two new wings were added to the building, doubling its size and gaining an inner courtyard, Roman-style, with loggias of marble colonnades, unusual in sixteenth-century Venice. At the time the vast space of the courtyard, with its asymmetrical porticoes laden with artfully arranged sculptures, relieves and inscriptions, must have appeared a stunning invitation to visit the rest of the collection and the pictorial wonders held in the upper floors of the palace.



2. Staircase

Between 1563 and 1565 the vault of the monumental Staircase, which leads to the *portego* (the traditional main room of the Venetian house), was richly ornamented with stuccoes and painted figures by Federico Zuccari. The subjects seemed to represent religious allegories; the painted decoration was completed with “grottesche” and floral arabesques while the stuccoes represented various sea creatures, based on ancient gems in the family collection. The magnificence of the Grimani glyptic collection originated two sets of prints of the gems, published in the 1550s and ‘60s; the match between the engravings and the staircase stuccoes lead us to assume that Giovanni Grimani had the engravings reproduced in these stuccoes, expecting observant visitors to discover their connection with his gems.

3. Camaron d’Oro

In the sixteenth century the three rooms preceding the Tribuna provided a gradual approach to its vista. The walls of the large room at the north-west corner of the palace, already known in the sixteenth century as the Camaron d’Oro – Large Gold Room – were entirely covered with tapestries featuring Bible scenes. They formed a backdrop for the painted terra cotta vases over the doors and the marble sculptures, including some statues of *Pallas*, *Mercury* and a colossal *Apollo*.

4. Foliage Room

The second room from the Tribuna, decorated with a lavish woods motif, for which it was called Sala a fogliami – Foliage Room – displayed lunettes with symbolic figures and Latin mottoes referring to Giovanni’s struggles with the church authorities. It was Camillo Mantovano’s major work in the Grimani palace. This room contained a monumental chimneypiece and many antique busts; its overdoors were adorned with fragments of roman sarcophagi.

5. Anteroom to the Tribuna

The ceiling of the Anteroom to the Tribuna in the nineteenth century still presented a painting, by Giuseppe Porta, with the *Contest of The Attica between Athena and Poseidon*. The room contained various antiques, outstanding among which was a long relief with a sacrificial scene (*Suovetaurilia*), now in Paris.

6. Tribuna

The Palazzo Grimani Tribuna was probably designed by Giovanni himself as a central-plan museum. It was a stylistic unicum, in Venice there was nothing like it. Severe, solemn, lit by the light falling from the central lantern, the room had a vaulted ceiling decorated with lacunars and the walls displayed niches and shelves for housing statues and busts. When it was dismantled in 1594, for the removal of the marbles to the Public Statuary, the room contained over one hundred and thirty sculptures including Greek and Roman works. A key sculpture has been brought back from the Archaeological Museum: The abduction of Ganymede, returned to its original position in the air space of the Tribuna vault.

7. Neoclassical Room

This room was refurbished at the end of the eighteenth century on the occasion of the wedding between the Roman princess Virginia Chigi and Giovanni Carlo Grimani, celebrated in 1791. The pictorial decoration of the ceiling was executed by an artist from Verona, Giovanni Faccioli. The subject of the wedding was illustrated by the mural painting above the entrance door which is a copy of the famous scene known as the *Aldobrandini Wedding*, a Roman fresco discovered during excavations in 1601 and purchased by cardinal Pietro Aldobrandini.

8. Dining Room

Camillo Mantovano painted the ceiling of the Dining Room, decorated with the fish and birds motifs. The seventeenth century painting in the centre of the ceiling, portraying *St. John baptizing the people*, is derived from a painting by Nicolas Poussin, conserved at the Louvre, and replaced the painting with the *Four elements* attributed to Giorgione in a nineteenth century guide. The oval shape is taken up again in the decoration of the pavement in *pastellone*, a characteristic type of crusted marble floor widely used in venetian buildings of which we have a great number of examples in this palace.

9. Room of the Doge Antonio, Vestibule and Chapel

In a decorative style quite alien to venetian culture a sumptuous display of rare marbles set in stucco frames adorns these rooms which belong to the final phase of the construction of the palace concluded by 1568. The Chapel was used by the patriarch Giovanni Grimani for private celebrations of the Mass. The splendid marble altar, missing now, is still recorded in the nineteenth century inventories. On the ceiling of the Vestibule are small frescoes framed with stuccoes. On one side a small window overlooks the spiral staircase of probable Palladian inspiration and the other a monumental marble portal leads to the room devoted to the Doge Antonio.

In the room devoted to the Doge Antonio Grimani, located between the east and the south wings of the palace, the space was dominated by two walls, facing each other, treated with the same decorative motif. The chimneypiece wall was adorned with marble vases and portrait busts, including two modern reproductions of Vitellius and Caracalla. It was devoted to the figure of Doge Grimani (as an inscription, still visible, placed at the top of the wall, indicates) and was apparently the privileged place for honouring him. The wall across from it displayed various antiques: two sleeping Eros, a group of Greek statuettes of female figures and also two landscape relieves with a sheep and lioness suckling their offspring, purchased on the Roman antique market. These works surrounded and surmounted a group with *Dionysus and Satyr*.

10. Chamber of Apollo

To renew the decoration of the family house Raphael's best assistants were engaged between 1537 and 1540; they worked at a suite of three rooms inspired by ancient mythology. In this room Francesco Salviati and Giovanni da Udine made stucco works and frescoes; the main subjects are the *Apotheosis of the Chariot of the Sun* and the *Stories of Marsyas*. A lunette, frescoed by Giuseppe Porta or Lambert Sustris, depicts the *Stories of Coriolanus* or the *Glorification of the Grimani Family*.

11. Chamber of Callisto

This room was adorned by Giovanni da Udine with the *Stories of Callisto* (the nymph of Diana's train who, seduced by Jove, banished by Diana and turned into a bear by Juno's revenge, finally becomes a star)..

12. Chamber of Psyche

Salviati was the author of an oil octagon representing Psyche adored as a goddess and was flange by Francesco Mezzocchi da Forlì who painted the *Stories of Psyche* and by Camillo Mantovano who frescoed the walls with garlands.

13. Bosch Room

The Grimani were important patrons of contemporary art too. Their collections not only embraced Venetian painters – such as Giorgione, Titian, Veronese, Jacopo Bassano and Tintoretto – but also Northern artists, like Memling, Patinir, Bosch and Dürer. They probably owned some Bosch's most celebrated images – *Vision of the Other World* – which are now displayed at Palazzo Grimani.

14. Room of the Fireplace

This large room was frescoed in the 1560s with the decorations composed of monochromes columns, few fragments of which survived. Dominating the space is the monumental fireplace in coloured marble and white stucco. The elegance and the quality of some particulars, such as the garlands and the wide mouth monster visible in the centre, recall the mannerist geniality and inventive extravagance of the solutions Federico Zuccari adopted in his private residence on the Pincio Hill in Rome.