



## The nineteenth century at Villa Farnesina The Duke of Ripalda, the Count Giuseppe Primoli and Rome new Capital of Italy

curated by Virginia Lapenta and Valeria Petitto

Rome - Villa Farnesina  
January 12 - February 25, 2023

*Leaving the Palazzo Corsini, we entered the Farnesina. What an enchanting site! When I read the description of some marvellous palace, it is always the Farnesina that stands before my dazzled eyes. What can I say about this vast room whose vault was painted by Raphael and his pupils; Psyche, Galatea, Venus, the goddesses, the Graces: Olympus competes with Paradise; the mother of Love with the mother of the infant Jesus. And if we wanted to move from the realm of art to that of history, what memories! It was in this poetic room that those great Renaissance orgies worthy of the ancient bacchanals took place, and which bear as little resemblance to our petty suppers as the Farnesina at the Golden House and Imperia at Cora Pearl.*

*Today the happy owner of this palace is the amiable Duke of Ripalda. He has signed an emphyteusis with the King of Naples, in which he undertakes to restore the Farnesina, which was falling into ruin, and to pay the modest sum of 15,000 fr. for 99 years, after which the Villa would return to its owner or his heirs. The Italian government arrived, cancelled the long lease contracts and gave the right to the tenants (of 100 years) to become owners by paying only the capital of their rent. Thus by giving 300,000 fr. the Duke could become the sole owner of these frescoes by Raphael and Julius Romano. Will he do it? If he does not, it is an excess of delicacy that cannot be praised enough; if he does, he cannot be blamed, for he has had to spend several million in the repairs he has made to the Palace. It is true that the sale of some frescoes would amply compensate him for his expenses.*

*The Duke of Ripalda is almost a historical figure. He was first of all a journalist of immense talent. He was in opposition to the ministry, which noticed the name of Bermudès de Castro at the bottom of violent polemical articles. Narvaez decided to attach himself to the fiery young man, he made him his creature and gave him assignments of trust, which he carried out with honour. He was created in turn Marquis of Lema, Duke of Ripalda, Prince of Santa Lucia. Then he was sent as ambassador to France and Naples where he rendered notable services to King Francis II either by his advice or by his money. The king never ceased to recognise them and it was in some way to compensate him that he gave him the Farnesina in emphyteusis.*

*It is said so loudly - that I am allowed to say it softly - that the lively duke was the lover of two queens.*

*There is something of Don Guichotte and Machiavelli in him.*

*Nothing interests me like bearing the Duke of Ripalda talk. He has seen so many men and things that his conversation is inexhaustible. It is a living contemporary history and one always learns to leaf through it. I asked him why he wouldn't write memoirs. He replied: "What's the point? If you wrote history as it was, you wouldn't believe it."*

Giuseppe Primoli, October 1873

**On the occasion of the Lincei conference held on 9 November 2021 entitled "Villa Farnesina: un esempio di resilienza e valorizzazione da Roma Capitale a oggi"** - a title that refers to the long history of the Villa Farnesina, to all the initiatives that have been pursued by the Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei with the aim of preserving and enhancing the value of this extraordinary Villa - some preliminary results were presented, exemplifying the activities planned beforehand, in view of the establishment of the "Centro linceo di ricerca sui beni culturali Villa Farnesina" (CERIF acronym).

Particular mention was made of recent cooperation agreements with leading Italian research organisations, including CNR, ENEA, INFN, INGV, and with leading European institutions, such as the *École française de Rome*, and with some important Roman museums, such as the Parco Archeologico del Colosseo and the Museo Nazionale Romano, with the aim of fostering exchanges in a reciprocal relationship.

**Accompanying the publication of the proceedings of the above-mentioned conference, the exhibition "L'Ottocento a Villa Farnesina. Il Duca di Ripalda, il conte Giuseppe Primoli e Roma nuova Capitale d'Italia"**, curated by Virginia Lapenta and Valeria Petitto, which opens on 12 January (and runs until 25 February at Villa Farnesina) aims to highlight the common aspects of two personalities, the Duke of Ripalda and Count Primoli, both 'foreigners' in a city they did not know. They met and became acquainted with each other (as can be seen from Giuseppe Primoli's diaries from those years), and they both lived in palaces overlooking the Tiber, Villa Farnesina and Palazzo Primoli, which had to undergo profound changes due to the construction of embankments to contain the river. In fact, this section of the exhibition, in collaboration with the Pirelli Foundation, will highlight how the construction of the Tiber embankments for the restoration of the young capital of the Kingdom of Italy - considered a prestigious national undertaking - constituted for the Villa Farnesina its first example of resilience. By 1950, what the Duke of Ripalda had feared became a reality: with the increased heavy motorised traffic on the stretch of the Lungotevere adjacent to the Villa Farnesina, the damage to the exterior of the building and to the frescoed plasterwork decorating the interior began to worsen. In 1956, a commission of specialists appointed by the Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, chaired by its member Eng. Gustavo Colonnetti, studied the defence plan of the Farnesina which took the form of a 'floating plate' of rubber bricks made by Saga-Pirelli; complete reliance on the practically unlimited durability of the chosen device has been confirmed by the latest surveys carried out by the INGV (National Institute of Geophysics and Volcanology).

Both the Duke of Ripalda - who arrived in Rome in 1861 - and Count Primoli - who had returned in 1871 after having been born there - thus found themselves experiencing and living with the profound social and urban transformations of the city that had become the capital of Italy.

The exhibition itinerary will accompany the visitor in the discovery of these two personalities, starting from their first meeting: telling their story will highlight their relationship with the changing city, and the photographs taken by Count Primoli in the last years of the 19th century will become the common thread that will guide the visitor through the various stages of the itinerary. Each step will also highlight, with clearly identifiable panels both graphically and chromatically, **the nineteenth-century appearance of the Villa Farnesina** room in which the visitor is standing, emphasising the details and particulars of the decorative elements, especially **the pictorial ornaments in faux drapery and the "sugo d'erba" paintings (grass-juice technique)**, designed to complement the existing Renaissance fresco decoration. A multimedia room will recount the evolution of the textile wall decorations which, from the 16th century to the contemporary age - ranging from tapestries to "corami" and wallpaper -, have distinguished the Villa Farnesina as outstanding symbols of the owner's wealth.

The last section of the exhibition on the first floor will describe the city "around the Villa Farnesina", with a *focus* on **Palazzo Farnese, Palazzo Corsini** and, thanks to the collaboration with the Sovrintendenza Capitolina ai Beni Culturali, on the history of the **Aurelian Walls in the 19th century**; in particular it will examine the so-called "Farnesina" section, which can be seen today in the garden of the Villa as one of the few remaining of the city walls, still preserved on the right bank of the Tiber.

After the annexation of Rome to the new Italian State, the wall system, deprived of its defensive function, followed the needs of urban expansion. Many sections were sacrificed to allow the connection between the inner city and the outlying districts, while some isolated portions were converted into artists' studios and dwellings. The exhibition - curated by the *École française de Rome* and featuring a number of drawings from a collection exhibited for the first time - presents the work of **architect Virginio Vespignani**, one of the protagonists of the artistic and architectural process of *renovatio urbis* (urban renovation) that sought to bring Rome closer to the models of modern European capitals; the exhibition delves into the issue that had already become a state affair since the Napoleonic period: the restoration and transformation of the walls that the emperors had bequeathed to the popes.

A series of essays, included as an appendix to the conference papers, deepen all the themes dealt with in the exhibition.

**Title**

*The nineteenth century at Villa Farnesina. The Duke of Ripalta, the Count Giuseppe Primoli and Rome new Capital of Italy*

**Location**

Villa Farnesina

Via della Lungara 230

00165 Rome

[www.villafarnesina.it](http://www.villafarnesina.it) ; [www.lincci.it](http://www.lincci.it)

**Dates to the public:**

January 12 - February 25, 2023

**Exhibition curated by:**

Virginia Lapenta and Valeria Petitto

**Promoters:** *Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei – Fondazione Primoli*

**Partnership:** *École française de Rome, Sovrintendenza Capitolina ai Beni Culturali, Fondazione Pirelli*

**With the patronage of:** *Associazione Amici dell'Accademia dei Lincei*

**Organizing Committee:** *Roberto Antonelli, Giorgio Parisi, Francesco Bruni, Antonio Calabrò, Louis Godart, Lamberto Maffei, Paolo Podio Guidugli, Alberto Quadrio Curzio, Umberto Quadrino, Antonio Sgamellotti, Lucia Tomasi Tongiorgi, Alessandro Zuccari*

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**Lenders:** *Fondazione Primoli, Biblioteca dell'Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei e Corsiniana, École française de Rome, Sovrintendenza Capitolina ai Beni Culturali, Fondazione Pirelli, Archivio di Stato di Roma, Museo Nazionale Romano, Unione Accademica Nazionale, Palazzo Chigi di Ariccia, Galleria d'Arte di Paolo Antonacci-Roma.*

**Organizing Committee of the Lincei conference “Villa Farnesina un esempio di resilienza e valorizzazione da Roma Capitale ad oggi”:** *Antonio Sgamellotti, Virginia Lapenta, Chiara Anselmi*

**Print of the Proceedings and the catalog:** *Antica Tipografia dal 1876 Srl-Roma*

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**Graphic design:** *Eduardo Mattiozzi*

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**Faux curtain decorations video:** *Maria Rosaria Cundari*

**Photographic prints:** *Davide di Gianni – Digid'A Fine art*

**App:** *MonteDelGallo S.r.l.s*

**Information and booking:**

[farnesina@lincei.it](mailto:farnesina@lincei.it) ; tel.: +(39) 0668027268; [www.villafarnesina.it](http://www.villafarnesina.it) e [www.lincei.it](http://www.lincei.it)

**Opening time:** *From Monday to Saturday from 9-14 (last admission at 1.15 pm). Second Sunday of the month from 9 am to 5 pm (last admission 4.15 pm)*

**Guided tours:**

*Every Saturday*

*10.30 am (English)*

*12.00 (Italian)*

*Every second Sunday of the month*

*12.30 - 15 - 16 (in Italian)*

**For groups** *(from 15 to max 25 people) mandatory reservation and mandatory use of the wisper*

**Extraordinary openings on request:** *farnesina2@lincei.it*

**Tickets:**

*The ticket can be purchased at the Villa Farnesina, via della Lungara 230; online purchase at [www.villafarnesina.it](http://www.villafarnesina.it)*

*- Full Ticket € 10 (app excluded): from 18 to 65 years of age*

*- Reduced Ticket € 9 (app excluded): over 65 years of age; teachers with identification cards; ICOM holders; FAI and Touring Club Italiano members.*

*- Reduced Ticket € 7 (app excluded): from 10 to 18 years old; students (high school and university with a letter from the school or identification cards).*

*- Reduced Schools Ticket € 5 (app excluded): for each student belonging to a school group (max 30 students) with accompanying teacher (free admission for the teacher).*

*-Free: (app excluded): children up to 10 years accompanied by their parents; disabled visitors with a companion; journalists with identification cards; licensed tour guides with card*

*-App cost: 3 euros*

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