



*Scuola Normale
Superiore di Pisa*



banca popolare di cortona
fondata nel 1881



The Palazzone, **Cortona**



The Palazzone, Cortona



The *Palazzone* was built for Silvio Passerini (1469-1529), Bishop of Cortona from 1521. A protégé of Lorenzo il Magnifico as a young man and later of his son Giovanni (the future Pope Leo X), Passerini subsequently became Cardinal, Governor of Florence, Legate of Perugia and guardian and tutor of the nephews of Clement VII, another Medici pope.



By 1527 Passerini's power was on the wane. The villa thus dates from the brief period in which he was at the height of political success. While reflecting the modern taste for a style reminiscent of the antique then fashionable at the courts of cardinals, the villa is of uncommon type. Its dominant tower, over 42 metres tall, gives it the air of a fortress. One reason for this may have been the villa's location outside the city, in a position which retains all its charm today. Close to a spring known by the name of "Cumula", it overlooks a hillside planted with olive and cypress, rising within crenellated walls behind a Renaissance style garden, complete with pond. The villa was designed by G.B. Caporali, who is also known as a painter (he was a pupil of Perugino's), as the translator of Vitruvius and as a friend of Pietro Aretino's. Among features of note in the interior are the paintings decorating the *salone* or main hall. Landscape scenes with classical architecture, framed within a painted loggia, are surmounted by sixteen panels representing episodes from Roman history. These are the work

The Palazzone, Cortona



of the Cortonese painter Tommaso Bernabei, known as “il Papacello”, who previously worked with Giulio Romano. He here shows himself to possess a lively and up-to-date narrative style, not without some harsh simplification in the drawing. In the background of the first scene, representing the *Battle of Lake Trasimene*, is a view of Cortona, which, with deliberate anachronism includes the *Palazzone* itself. Another fresco in the hall takes us to Rome and to the astounding archeological finds of the early sixteenth century, in particular to that of the *Laocoön*. Also of note is “Cardinal’s apartment”, on

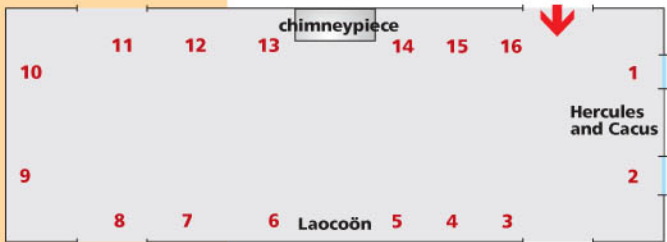
The Palazzone, Cortona



the extreme right of the building, decorated with frescoes dating from 1819, and the chapel facing the main entrance, which contains a *Baptism of Christ* by Luca Signorelli, unfortunately surviving in poor condition. Vasari wrote that Signorelli “was unable to finish it completely, as he died while still working on it” (1523).

In 1968 Count Lorenzo Passerini donated the Palazzone, together with all its furnishings and artworks, to the Scuola Normale Superiore, Pisa, which uses it as a venue for seminars, conferences and special courses.

The Palazzone, Cortona



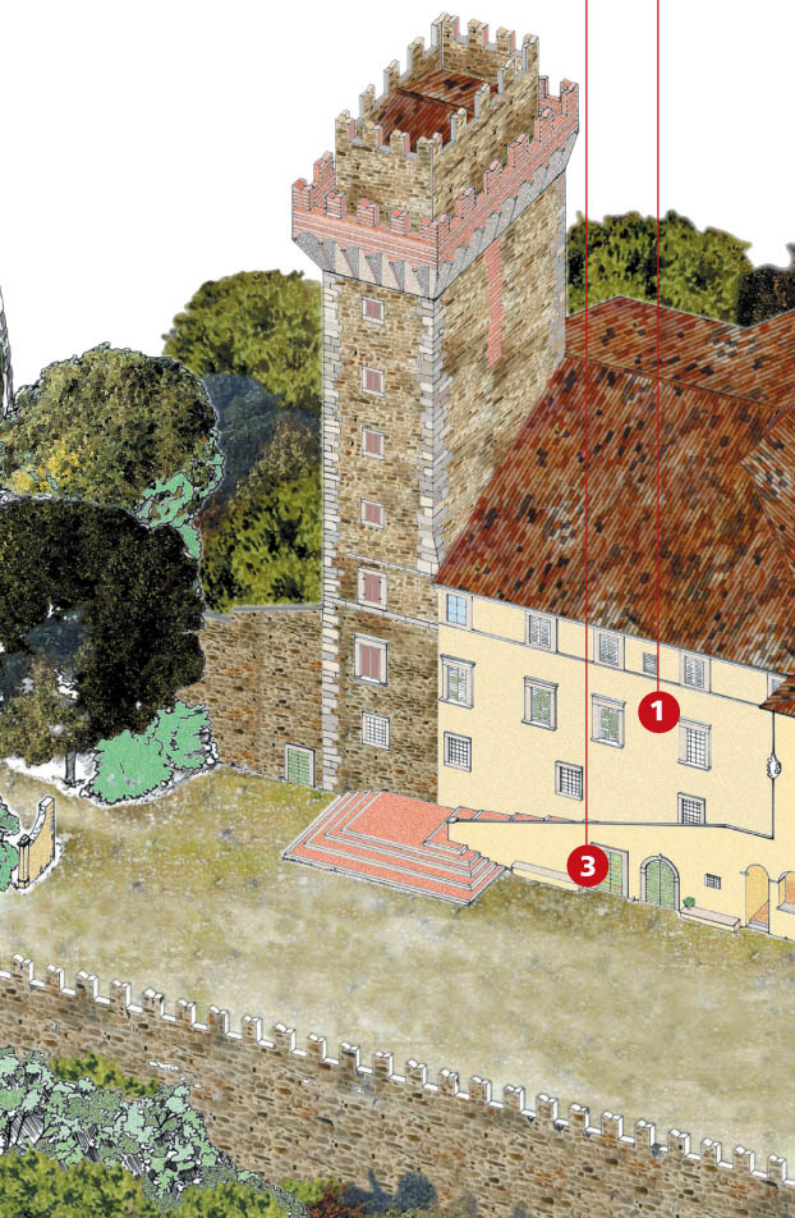
Papacello,
details from
**The Battle
of Lake Trasimene
and Laocoön**

Sala del Papacello Episodes from Roman History

1. Battle of Lake Trasimene (with view of Cortona and the Palazzone).
2. The appointment of Cincinnatus as dictator.
3. L. Junius Brutus at the temple of Delphi.
4. The fight between the Horatii and the Curiatii.
5. The loyalty of M. Furius Camillus.
6. The murder of Tarquinius Priscus by the sons of Ancus Martius.
7. Curius Dentatus refusing the offers of the Samnite ambassadors.
8. Clelia and her companions fleeing across the Tiber.
9. Mucius Scaevola placing his hand in the fire in front of Porsenna.
10. Horatius Cocles defending the Sublician bridge.
11. The rape of Lucretia by Sextus Tarquinius.
12. Lucretia committing suicide in the presence of her husband and L. Junius Brutus.
13. Marcus Curtius on horseback leaping into the chasm.
14. Hasdrubal's head is thrown into the camp of his brother Hannibal.
15. Sentence being declared on the innocent Virginia.
16. The murder of Virginia by her father.

*Sala del Papacello, with frescoes
of episodes from Roman history*

*Night-time entrance
(from 20 to 8)*



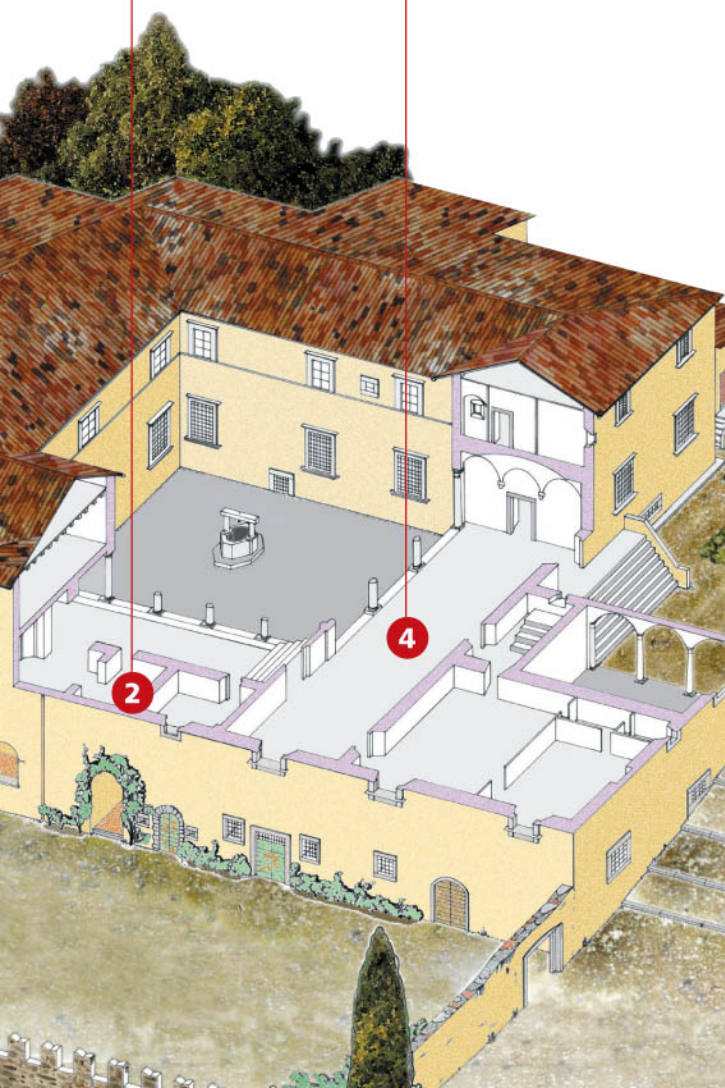
Graphic design: C. Cassanelli (SNS, Pisa)

Photographs: Pino Dell'Aquila (Turin)

*Dino Giannessi and Giandonato Tartarelli
(SNS, Pisa, Photographic workshop)*

*Chapel, with fresco by
Luca Signorelli*

Billiard room



How to get there



For further information

"Palazzone"

Via Case Sparse, 193
52044 Cortona (AR)

Telephone:
+39 050.509399
+39 0575.630164 (also fax)

e-mail:
segreteria.palazzone@sns.it
web-site: www.sns.it

Cortona is served by two train stations: **Camucia** (3 km) and **Terontola** (7 km). Both of these offer bus and taxi services.

Visitors arriving by car are advised to leave the A1 motorway by the exit marked **Val di Chiana** (20 km.). To reach the *Palazzone*, take the main road for Cortona from Camucia. At the crossroads just outside the city take the right-hand turn indicated by the brown sign for **Il Palazzone**. Follow the road for about 200 m. until reaching a fork marked by a similar sign. Take the narrow road on the left leading up the hill. After about 1000 m. you will reach a third sign for **Il Palazzone**, and after another 60 m. you will enter the second large gate on the left.