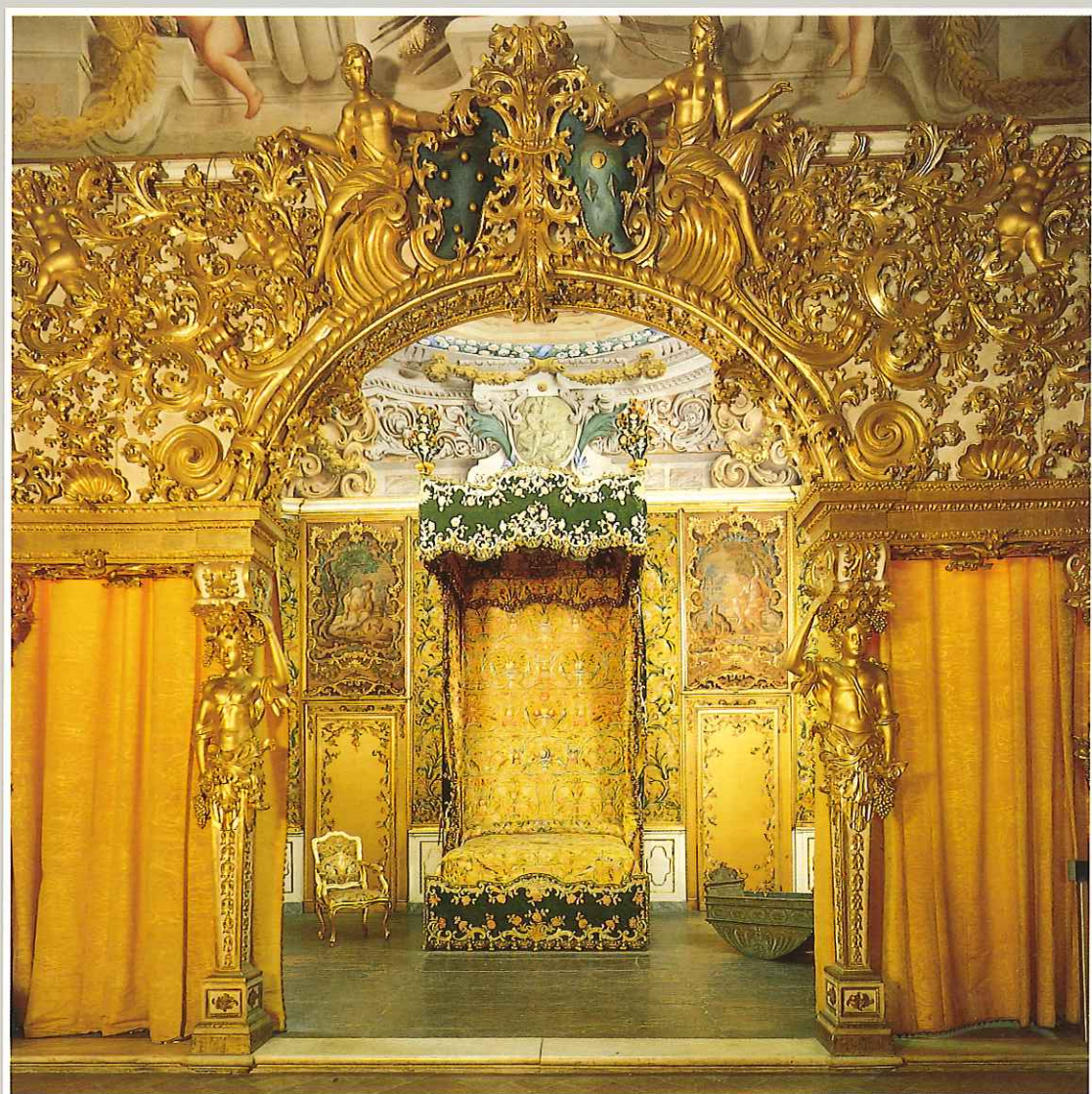


National Museum of Palazzo Mansi
Lucca



A Palace turned private museum.

In 1965 the State acquired from the ancient Mansi family the palace that has been in the family for centuries. The motives were two: the building, though lacking nearly all of its furnishings, having been dispersed through various events on the antique markets, did conserve intact the exceptional monumental quarters on the floor of the nobility, magnificently decorated with frescoes, tapestries, and silk wall hangings. Secondly, the palace turned out to be the most appropriate residence in which to lodge the painted works from the National Museum in Lucca and now under the care of the Provincial Administration at their center.

From 1965 to 1967 under the attentive eye of the Superintendent the palace was consolidated, restored, and rebuilt to make the private residence into a museum the public could enjoy.

The work was complex and costly and also concerned with the restoration of the apartment that – although intact – needed to be restored to its original decor.

The opening to the public in 1977 of an initial preparation of the Picture Gallery as well as twelve rooms – a circuit intended for temporary exhibitions – was made possible with the slight but constant financing supplied by the Minister of Cultural Protection in the span of a decade.

The public could also visit the monumental apartment, however incomplete the preparation. In those first years some important exhibitions could be held just within the circuit of the twelve rooms on the ground floor.

With the determining finances of F.I.O., from 1985 to today, the preparation of the palace was completed. From the security systems to the heating system to the lighting all the necessary systems were installed and the monumental apartment was completed and made a pleasure to behold; the Painting Gallery was definitively systemized; the section containing the antique fabrics and 19th century looms presented by Niemack was also organized; rooms were prepared for storage; finally and just recently three new rooms and the chapel on the Floor of the Nobility were furnished and opened.

And now, two new sections are under preparation, one pertaining to the figurative culture of Lucca and the other relevant to historical fabric.

And known to all, is the great significance of bringing about the establishment of a Didactic Section which was assigned special quarters in the West Wing in 1977.

The Palace. How was it then? How is it now?

Between the 1500's and the 1600's with the incorporation and the transformation of preexisting houses (some of them of medieval origin) was born the original nucleus of the building that the Mansi wished to be their residence in the city. During the Renaissance period in Lucca palaces were built utilizing areas of previous construction: more precisely, through the union of preexisting minor buildings. The original practicality of medieval nature was respected and maintained in its main characteristics: to this end one frequently sacrificed the vision, frontal and complete, of the prospect for a distinguished palace. The facades, often of nobile form and rich with beautiful portals can only be seen foreshortened. However, it is possible to read the structural "message" of the palaces: hierarchical allotment of the floors from the servants quarters to the floor of the nobility to the ground floor is indicated by designated levels. The grandeur of entry was highlighted by the massive doors also suitable for the passage of carriages. However, it is a sobriety maintained on the exterior and which contrasts with the sumptuous articulation of the interior. One special element that distinguishes the Mansi Palace can be found in the stairway that rises to the Floor of the Nobility. Its construction is according to a playful perspective that gives the sensation of a single imposing flight along the internal facade concluding in a portico that appears above the garden.

The internal arrangement and decoration of the diverse milieus were modified many times during the course of labor that extended from the second half of the sixteenth hundreds to the beginning of the eighteenth hundreds. In this way was composed and defined that which was and remains to be the heart of the structure: the Floor of the Nobility with its milieu.

The palace in a 16th century map.

The Grand Entrance Doors.

The internal Stairway

