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PALAZZO FARNESE

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Photographs by Zeno Colantoni*

Palazzo Farnese, currently housing the French Embassy, is one of the great emblematic buildings of the Renaissance and one of the most famous palaces in Rome. It is intimately linked to the figure of Pope Paul III Farnese and was built and decorated in order to highlight the family's recent glory. All the leading artists of Rome contributed, making it now an essential landmark in sixteenth-century art in Italy.

Four great architects were commissioned to build it between 1513 and 1589: Antonio da Sangallo the Younger, Michelangelo, Vignola, and Guglielmo della Porta. Equally renowned painters decorated the interior: Daniele da Volterra, Salviati, Zuccari, and lastly the Carracci, who embellished the building with some of the finest frescoes in Rome, notably the famous Carracci Gallery.

It has housed the French Embassy and the École Française de Rome since 1874 and 1875, respectively, and therefore only a restricted number of rooms are accessible during the six weekly guided tours that the embassy organizes. The visits are subject to booking and do not come close to satisfying the considerable demand.

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