



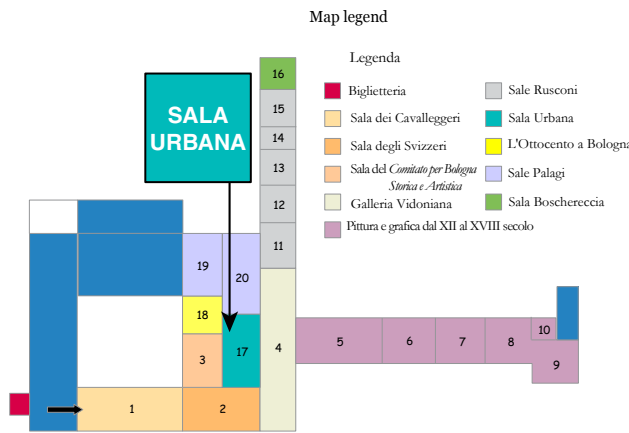
legation and the duchy of Modena (1630-1634). Between the windows, the top decorations include the coats of arms of those who were first legates in Bologna before becoming popes: Giovanni XXIII, Eugenio IV, Giulio II, Leone X, Clemente VII, Pio IV, Giulio III, Urbano VII, Paolo V, Urbano VIII.

The flat ceiling is decorated with the typical “quadratura” painting, the technique developed in Bologna during the baroque period. The application of the Brunelleschi style perspective increased the depth of the space creating some illusion visual effects: trompe l’oeil and fake arcades, vaults and balconies. The general project was developed by a specialist of that time who was assisted by a figurative painter who inserted mythological, allegorical and floral patterns. The two perspective artists Girolamo Curti (called Dentone) and Agostino Mitelli, were joined by Angelo Michele Colonna who worked specifically on the figures for his first public assignment.

The painting is the celebration of the person who commissioned the work: cardinal Bernardino Spada, whose heraldic crests, swords and French lilies, intertwine in the fake reliefs and are enhanced in the duel among three winged puttos at the centre of the ceiling. They fight with

three swords and they defend themselves with threes shields all decorated with the French lilies. After the touch-up done by Flaminio Minozzi (1774) and the renovation of 1852, a further restoration of the room was completed in the 1930s, in order to use the former Prefecture spaces for visits and exhibitions. During that work, guided by the engineer Guido Zucchini, the paintings were refreshed and the floor lowered by a few centimetres considerably modifying the visual effect of the painted perspective. In this period precious antique marble flooring was also reinstalled.

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Map of the Municipal Ancient Art Collection - Piazza Maggiore, 6
www.museibologna.it/arteantica

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Sala Urbana

In the heart of the town hall
 At the centre of History



www.bolognawelcome.it

City Information Office
 Piazza Maggiore 1/e

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The *Sala Urbana* is part of the *Collezioni Comunali d'Arte* (city art collections), a municipal museum established in 1936 in the former official apartment of the Apostolic Legate, on the second floor of *Palazzo d'Accursio* building. In the Papal State, Bologna was the second most important city after Rome and was administered by an Apostolic Legate. Cardinal Bernardino Spada arrived in the city in August 1627 and "since he stepped in the great palace for Legates started to embellish it with doors, windows, perspectives and similar things that made it look twice as big as it was". The *Sala Urbana* is at the heart of these works aimed at making the ancient palace spaces more suitable to the representation

needs of the baroque era. Its decoration marks the beginning of the great season of the "quadraturismo prospettico" (illusionistic painting technique), the movement for which the Bolognese school became famous internationally. Back to Bologna for a second mandate in 1630, Cardinal Spada commissioned the construction of the room and dedicated it to the ruling Pope of the time, Urbano VIII Barberini (1622-1644), hence the name.



The layout is rectangular and its outside shape stands out and overtops by 12 metres the building's roof, catching natural light through large windows in order to lighten up the space. Four doors connect it with the surrounding rooms, another two were walled-up. On the portal's architraves is written in capital Latin letters the name of the person who commissioned the work, Bernardino Spada. The whole place looks like a painted heraldic museum in the same decorative tradition long practiced in the *Archiginnasio* palace, the seat of the Bologna University from 16th and 19th century.

The decoration of the walls start with a high monochromatic base imitating a frieze sculpted with prelate hats, bees (symbol of the Pope's family, the Barberini) and interwoven astylar crosses and swords. On the four walls, between the frieze and the windows base, 188 coats of arms of legated cardinals, governors and other administrators of the Papal State between 1327 and 1744. Above every coat of arms is the office held: cardinal (cardinal red hat), cardinal-bishop (with a cross), bishop (green hat), governor (black square cap), captain (helmet), nobleman (crown). In the captions below the signs, sometimes repeated because of the office renewal, there are the person's name and the duration of the office.



After a long period of dismissal and degradation, between the Napoleonic period and the Restoration, in 1852 the room was refurbished as a papal memorial place following the restoration works promoted by the deputy-legate cardinal Gaetano Bedini and supported by Pope Pio IX. The event is recollected on a memorial plaque on one of the two monuments painted at the centre of the main walls, the south one towards the Vidoniana Gallery. The painted marble-like framing includes fake-golden bronze statues, figures embodying the History (left-hand side) and the Government (right-hand side). They were made by the Bolognese artist Napoleone Angiolini, who also made the large monument painted on the opposite wall celebrating Pope Urban VIII. The figures of Religious Poetry and Fame, each one beside the *URBANO ET PATRIAE* epigraph, refer to the juvenile literary activity of the Pope, whose fake-bronze bust lies in the above oval niche. Originally, here there was a door supposed to visually connect the two wings of the second floor: Palatine Chapel (later named Farnese) and the Princes' Apartment (rooms 5-10 of the City Art Collections), through the Regia [royal] (now Farnese) and Urban Room.

On the minor walls, facing each other inside some boxed frames, there are two town facilities built during Pope Urban VIII's pontificate: the Urbana street, located between street Saragzza and San Mamolo street (today D'Azeglio street), widened and devoted to the Pope by Cardinal Spada (1629) and the *Forte Urbano* in Castelfranco Emilia, an imposing star-shaped fortress on the border between the Bologna

