



THE MASCARINO STAIRCASE

Ottaviano Mascarino, whose name was given to this magnificent staircase, was the architect who designed the first part of the Quirinale Palace in the late 16th Century. The building, commissioned by Pope Gregory XIII, was a villa where the Pope intended to spend the summer months taking advantage of its position on the Quirinal hill, a location considered to be fresher and airier than the Vatican.

The staircase was the principal way of access to the upper floors of the villa and Mascarino designed it with great care, giving it a spiral shape based on an original elliptical plan. Pairs of travertine columns support and embellish the ramp, while the natural light falling into the stairwell from above creates fascinating chiaroscuro effects against the semi-darkness of the steps.

This staircase is Mascarino's most famous architectural design and has always been greatly admired, so much so that Francesco Borromini built a faithful replica of it in Palazzo Barberini.