

## Antique furniture

Most of the furniture of the Quirinale Palace was manufactured in France.

They comprise important pieces from the Duchy of Parma which belonged to Louise-Elisabeth, the daughter of King Louis XV of France and wife of Philip of Bourbon, heir of the Farnese Family's duchy.

The collection includes console tables, finishings for sofas and armchairs, and other objects (including clocks, wall lamps, andirons, candelabras) from the furnishings of the ducal palaces of Parma and Colorno and the residence of Sala.

After 1860, in the aftermath of the Unification of Italy, these objects were brought to Rome in several stages after having passed through the Savoy residences in Turin, Genoa and Florence, to decorate the former pontifical Quirinale Palace, which was chosen to be the residence of the Royal Family of Italy.

Among the pieces of furniture dating back to the reign of Louis XV, all of which of excellent quality, special mention is owed to the commode crafted by Jean Pierre Latz (Cologne 1691 ca. – Paris 1754), dating from the mid-18<sup>th</sup> Century, featuring a rare wave-patterned veneer with bois satiné and curling gilt-bronze mounts destined to be sold to a wealthy clientele. The stamp of Latz the *menuisier* is also found on two corner cupboards decorated with floral marquetry of several woods against a ground of bois satiné.

A pair of corner cupboards (dated 1750 ca.), bearing the stamp of French cabinet maker Jacques Dubois (Pontoise 1694 - Paris 1763), also veneered in floral marquetry of *bois de violette*, with curling gilt-bronze decorations, vine shoots and *rocailles*.

Deserving special mention is the group of sofas, armchairs and stools made by French wood carvers for the court of Parma in the middle of the 1700s, decorated with floral marquetry, gilded wood and magnificent *rocailles* and upholstered in tapestries woven in a vertical loom, probably from the Beauvais Manufactory, or with a Marseilles matelassé cloth.

The collection also includes important pieces purchased during the second Bourbon reign of the Parma Duchy, who regained possession of the duchy in 1848 after the brief rule of Marie Louise, Duchess of Parma (1816-1847) and second wife of Napoleon Bonaparte. They consist of a group of [sofas](#) and chairs made by the famous *menuisier* Louis Delanois, the supplier of furniture to the Royal Family of France.

It once belonged to the King's favourite, Madame Du Barry, and was located in the Pavillon de Louveciennes described in an inventory of the residence drafted in 1774, after the death of Louis XV.

This precious group of furniture is enriched with the prestigious [commode](#) by Bernard Vanrisamburgh, featuring black lacquer panels decorated with golden bulrush patterns and adorned with bronze decorations.

The Italian-made furniture includes particularly important pieces also brought to Rome from the residences of the House of Savoy.

They include the prestigious furnishings made by Pietro Piffetti (1700 - Turin 1777), the most renowned Italian wood carver, for the Royal Palace of Turin. They consist of a [bureau cabinet](#) with allegorical inscriptions on ivory plates, the commodes and the pair of pedestals that show the unrivalled mastery of craftsmanship combining different materials (ivory, bone, mother-of-pearl, and several types of woods) in a magnificently variegated Baroque design.

Another jewel of this collection is the library made by the same wood carver with rare and precious woods and ivory which once stood in a hall on the ground floor of the Queen's Villa in Turin and was later transported to Rome and re-assembled in a room of the Palazzina Gregoriana section of the Quirinale

Palace: whole panels fitted with shelves and niches for books and a table covered by an ivory plate engraved with genre art scenes.

The group of [armchairs with the twelve signs of the zodiac](#) brought from Villa Pisani in Stra, where it had been listed in the inventory of 1809, was made by the Venetian-born wood carver Andrea Brustolon (Belluno 1662 - 1732) and constitutes one of the most original masterpieces of the Baroque period, with a rich iconographic repertory of intertwining fruits and plants and the representations of the twelve months of the year.

Few pieces of furniture remain from the papal period.

As is known, when the Popes left the Palace after the Unification of Italy, the rooms appeared rather unfurnished if not completely barren to the new tenants, except for a few console tables that with their exuberant decorations with curls, vine shoots and grotesque masks, bear witness to the Roman-made furniture from between the late 17<sup>th</sup> and mid-18<sup>th</sup> Centuries, especially the six Roman console tables from the first quarter of the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, in sculpted and carved gilded wood and with majestic masks mounted on the corners.

The collection includes a group of [console tables](#) dated from the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, featuring a marble top and a pedestal in the shape of a winged lion, in a vaguely Empire style, standing in the state rooms and listed in the inventory of 1870, which was drafted immediately after General La Marmora took possession of the Quirinale Palace.

Another type of console is supported by a curved pedestal embedding a central shell in the neo-Baroque style that was popular in Europe in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and that was acquired under the reign of Pius IX. This type of console table went with a group of twelve stools with curved legs and goat-hoofed feet especially made for Pius IX's private Papal Audience Hall documented in prints of the papal rooms of the time.

Six more pedestals dating from the reign of Clement XIV and crafted into a particular balustrade shape supported by three ravens, designed by architect Giovanni Stern (1734-1794) and sculpted in 1774 by a Roman carver who was commissioned other works by the Vatican. The pedestals were destined to support several Oriental monumental porcelain vases.

The collection also includes a pair of console tables from the Rospigliosi family: two superb examples of Baroque marquetry intertwining scrolls, curls, female protomes, trophies made of coat of arms and emblems of war; and two pieces from the Borghese family with supports alternatively shaped as a dragon and eagle sculpted by Roman carver Antonio Landucci in 1773.

The Tuscan-made furniture dating from the late 18<sup>th</sup> Century includes the chairs and sofas brought to Rome from the Florentine Palazzo Pitti residence under the Savoy reign.

The eclecticism under the reign of the House of Savoy could not overlook the current style of furniture. A campaign was started in the 1870s to massively purchase furnishings prevalently in the neo-Baroque style in an ostentatious display of gold decorations, mirrors and Murano lamps, glittering with gold, in a revisitation of the French Louis XV style.

The furniture is on display in the Savoy's wing of the Quirinale Palace that hosted the Royal State Rooms (The Grand Ballroom, The Hall of Mirrors, The Hall of Tapestries), according to the needs of the Court. It includes console tables surmounted by mirrors, vitrine cabinets, the Brustolon imitation chairs of 1888 that were destined to furnish the entrance hall of the first Imperial Apartment in the so-called *Manica Lunga* (Long Wing) made by Besarel, Queen Margherita's favourite Venetian wood carver who crafted much of the furniture for the King's and Queen's private quarters; the so-called "Japanese Parlour" that was

reassembled in 1888 on the occasion of the first visit to the Quirinale Palace of Wilhem II, Emperor of Germany, featuring black lacquer and gold panels brought from the “Chinese-style rooms” of Turin’s Venaria Reale Palace and subsequently moved to the royal residence in Moncalieri.

The rooms evoke the exoticisms so much in vogue at the time, creating an atmosphere inspired by the eclectic artistic tastes of Gabriele D’Annunzio, including Oriental-style furniture expressly made for the occasion.

The Quirinale Palace’s furniture collection spans over an extraordinary range of different styles and epochs, originating from several regions of the Italian peninsula, and grouped together in the highest-ranking seat of Italian institutions, bearing tangible witness to the Italian monarchs’ perceived primary duty to represent the national unity.