

**IL CIRCOLO
DEI LETTORI**

Torino
Palazzo Graneri della Roccia
via Bogino 9

Novara
Complesso Monumentale del Broletto
via F.lli Rosselli 20

011 4326827
info@circololettori.it | circololettori.it



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PALAZZO GRANERI DELLA ROCCIA

ITS HISTORY

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PALAZZO GRANERI DELLA ROCCIA

THE BUILDING

Palazzo Graneri della Rocca was designed by Giovanni Francesco Baroncelli, Guarino Guarini's assistant and a former pupil of Count Amedeo di Castellamonte, and construction began in 1683. Baroncelli was also responsible for the urban redevelopment of the city of Turin and for designing Palazzo Barolo. Construction work finished in 1702, eight years after Baroncelli's death. The Graneri family, which specialised in trading ferrous materials, rose to occupy influential posts, thanks also to its proven loyalty to the Royal House of Savoy. Their noble title was acquired by Gaspare, the head of the household, who became Count of Mercenasco, a title which later passed down to his first-born son, Tommaso, who became Marquis della Rocca. Nevertheless, it was Gaspare's younger son, Marco Antonio Graneri, who commissioned the palace and insisted on its completion despite unfavourable historical events such as the war with France (1690-1696).

THE PALACE

The refined decor of its apartments, inspired by the greatest artistic achievements of the time, their size and the high quality of the materials employed all contribute to making Palazzo Graneri one of Turin's most prestigious aristocratic palaces. Its imposing, yet sober, façade is perfectly in keeping with the style of the time and the main door opens in scenic fashion to reveal an elegant porticoed atrium beyond. Although preserving their original architectural features, some stuccos, frescoes and ornaments, the Apartments of the piano nobile (main floor) bear the mark of its neo-Classical renovation in the 1700s. The Central Hall, in particular, with its stuccos dating from 1781, is a jewel of Baroque architecture. Designed by the architect Dellala di Beinasco and envisaged by Baroncelli as the Grand Hall, its imposing size – 12 metres in height by 150 m² –

was inspired by the Hall of Diana in the Palace of Venaria. Consisting of a central section and two side wings, the palace has a horseshoe shape. It encroached on an area once occupied by a large garden that stretched as far as today's Via San Francesco da Paola. There was once a secondary entrance near a majestic fountain, now lost.

FESTIVITIES CELEBRATING THE VICTORY AGAINST FRANCE

It was in the Grand Hall that Duke Victor Amadeus II and his court, Prince Eugene of Savoy and General Daun – the commander of Turin's stronghold – with a retinue of officers and generals all gathered to celebrate the Piedmontese victory over besieging French troops on the night of 07th September 1706, three years after the death of the abbot Graneri, after a Te Deum was said in the Cathedral to give thanks. This signalled the beginning of the Great Piedmontese Eighteenth Century. With the Treaty of Utrecht signed on 12th July 1713, Victor Amadeus II of Savoy became King of Sicily, a kingdom which he later exchanged for the Realm of Sardinia on 02nd September 1720.

THE CIRCOLO DEGLI ARTISTI CLUB AND ITS FESTIVITIES

In 1858, the Circolo degli Artisti club – founded ten years earlier by Luigi Rocca, a lawyer – decided to transfer its headquarters to the palace. Its President was Massimo D'Azeglio. Its illustrious members included Stefano Tempia, Francesco Tamagno, Alfredo Casella, Nino Costa and Camillo Benso di Cavour (the room Cavour used as his study is now named after him and still today boasts his desk and a bust placed there at his death in 1861). The first grand event held by the Circolo degli Artisti in its new headquarters was a ball to celebrate the engagement of Prince Napoléon Joseph Charles Paul Bonaparte with Princess Maria Clotilde of Savoy in 1859. Many of the great musicians of the

time passed through the halls of Palazzo Graneri, from Stefano Tempia and Gualfardo Bercanovich to Federico Collino and even Arturo Toscanini and Alfredo Casella. Others included Francesco Tamagno, whose "high C" shook the Grand Hall's great chandelier in 1905.

THE CIRCOLO DEI LETTORI BOOK CLUB

In 2006, Turin was the joint World Book Capital (with Rome) and Palazzo Graneri became the headquarters of the Circolo dei Lettori club. Founded by the Department of Culture of Piedmont Region, with funding from the Compagnia di San Paolo foundation, it was run by Maurizia Rebola and chaired by Luca Beatrice. It is a public venue entirely devoted to silent and individual reading, group readings and reading aloud, a place where readers can meet their favourite writers, exchange opinions and make books the subject of a common passion, a point of view that leads us to go read the world. Every day, its halls – the Great Hall for larger audiences, the Reading Room and the Philosopher's Hall, the Artists' Hall and the Chinese Room – are filled with people driven by the desire to meet between the lines, seeking to spend time together, read books and newspapers, leaf through the eBook virtual library and chat in Barney's – the club's café – sipping a cup of coffee or tasting one of its sandwiches inspired by great classics of literature. From Daniel Pennac and David Grossman to Art Spiegelman and Patti Smith, the Circolo dei Lettori has seen great figures of international culture pass through its doors. Its programme offers an enormous range of events, with over 100 meetings every month including book clubs, themed courses, educational workshops and cultural programmes. Moreover, every year new projects of international breadth, such as Torino Spiritualità – a festival focusing on Mankind and our time.

LA TAMPA

The culinary heart of the Circolo degli Artisti, now the Circolo dei Lettori restaurant. La Tampa is a 'hole', or tavern: that's how this place where patrons of the Circolo degli Artisti met was called, a jovial venue thanks to both its decor and its regulars. Bartolomeo Gallo describes it as a spicy and distinctive feature of daily life there. Set up in the post-war period by irreverent artists in the palace's mezzanine rooms, La Tampa gradually grew in size and renown until it took on its unmistakable character: a tavern and art club, a lay temple of festive dinners and heated debates on issues that have always been dear to painters, sculptors and academics, a place of intellectual inspiration based on culinary meditation. Under its low vaulted ceilings, vividly decorated by Felice Vellan and his associates, legions of artists and lovers of cheerful life and conversation have passed through: illustrious guests, painters, sculptors, famous musicians, great stage actors and actresses of Turin's theatres, famous conductors and Turin's aristocrats. A collection of portraits and self-portraits hang from the walls of La Tampa, a collection that first began as a game at a costume party for the royal wedding of Umberto of Savoy and Maria José of Belgium, and which then continued to grow, thanks to new works of art donated by artists, until it reached its current size, with approximately a hundred paintings of particular artistic and historical importance. Today there is still a high quality restaurant specialising in traditional Piedmontese dishes, reinterpreted in a light-hearted way and featuring seasonal produce. The restaurant offers buffets, working lunches and themed dinners prepared by a team of young professionals headed by its chef, Stefano Fanti.