The KHI (Kunsthistorisches Institut) in Florence is one of the oldest research institutes dedicated to the history of art and architecture in Italy. Founded by a group of scholars as a private initiative in 1897, it has been part of the Max Planck Society since 2002, since which time its research profile has been expanded. How would one set about renovating the premises of such a prestigious Institute without curtailing its research activities? When the KHI was confronted with this challenge back in 2010, the suggestion was made to move the photo library "Photothek" to the Palazzo Grifoni Budini Gattai for the duration of the works. The palace is located in the center of Florence between the Duomo and the Basilica della Santissima Annunziata, close to the Academy, the University and the KHI. This enabled the spatial integrity of important areas of the Kunsthistorisches Institut to be ensured during the time of the relocation.

The Renaissance-style Palazzo Grifoni was commissioned by Ugolino Grifoni and built in the 16th century. It was later refurbished in 1890 when it was acquired by the Budini Gattai family. In 2010, the Photothek was built into the reception rooms in the Piano nobile using a room-within-a-room concept, thus preserving the original structure of the listed historic halls. Every square inch was exploited to allow the photographs to remain freely accessible to researchers on open shelves, while also housing archival materials, the photo library, work desks, and a lecture hall.

With its 620,000 photographs, the Photothek is one of the most important collections for research into Italian art and architecture. The holdings and archives have long since become research objects in their own right. With projects, conferences, workshops, and publications, the Photothek plays a leading role in the international discourse surrounding the function of photo archives in the 21st century.

The KHI's online exhibition
http://photothek.khi.fi.it/documents/oau/00000072

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RESEARCH
ON THE PIANO NOBILE

ON
LOCATION
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