



Photo: Bibliotheca Hertziana

Gateway to Hell or Portal to Paradise?

The gaping, terrifying jaws of hell in Rome's Via Gregoriana: in Federico Zuccari's day, the entryway led directly into the garden of the palazzo that the famous painter commissioned on Pincian Hill for himself and his family in the late 16th century. Long closed to the public, the palazzo was reopened at the beginning of the year and now serves as a portal to paradise for art historians and all who are interested in art history. Rising behind lofty heritage-protected walls and barely visible from the street, a compact yet finely wrought new building is home to a library containing almost 300,000 volumes and the photographic collection of the Bibliotheca Hertziana.

Bequeathed to the Kaiser Wilhelm Society in the early 20th century by patron Henriette Hertz, the Bibliotheca Hertziana is celebrating its centennial this year as the Max Planck Institute for Art History. In addition to the Palazzo Zuccari, the centerpiece of the institute, the current premises also include the neighboring Palazzo Stroganoff and the Villino Stroganoff on the opposite side of the street. Following the opening of the spectacular new library building designed by Spanish architect Juan Navarro Baldeweg after more than ten years in construction, the institute library – the only one of its kind in the world – is once again open to the public and to researchers from around the globe.

Five levels of tiered galleries are grouped around a trapezoidal inner courtyard, providing scholars with light-flooded working areas. In addition, the windows offer a generous view over the Eternal City: art historians thus have the object of their research directly before their eyes. A truly paradisiacal garden for academic pursuits.