

# Palace of Arts

In the early years of the 20th century, artists, scientists and academics of all walks, united in their love for Italian art, gathered frequently at the Palazzo Zuccari. Hostess of this cultural salon was a German art lover and patron, **Henriette Hertz**. Her ideas still live on today at the **Bibliotheca Hertziana**, which she bequeathed to the Kaiser Wilhelm Society.

TEXT **ELKE MAIER**

Even back in ancient times, this was an area that beckoned with exceptional pleasure: on the southern slopes of Monte Pincio, the Roman general and gourmet Lucius Licinius Lucullus invited his guests to lavish feasts at his garden villa. However, the affluent Roman not only provided for the physical well being of his guests: with his extensive library, he created a place of intellectual pleasures and a meeting point for scholars. In so doing, he established a tradition that continues to this day. At the Palazzo Zuccari, which was built on the foundations of the ancient garden villa, the Bibliotheca Hertziana serves art historians with a unique collection of books and photography. This important art institute was named after its founder Henriette Hertz, the daughter of a Jewish family from Cologne.

Henriette Hertz was born on January 5, 1846. As a precocious young girl, she showed great interest in art, literature and languages. Her classmate Frida Loewenthal was her kindred spirit who, in turn, sang the praises of her new friend "Harry" who fluently spoke English, French and Italian, and who was a great art enthusiast.

Time-honored rooms: This photo, taken in 1923, shows the richly-ornamented main hall of the library.



The two women worked tirelessly to complete their knowledge of art, literature and philosophy. They learned ancient Greek in order to read Homer in the original. In addition, they attended lectures about Greek mythology and history. Their evenings were often spent with a group of friends who translated the works of Shakespeare, Dickens and Dante. They declared their thirst for education to be their purpose in life: "For living purpose!"

Henriette Hertz's love of Renaissance art inspired her, starting in 1882, to undertake regular journeys to Italy, often accompanied by her childhood friend Frida and Frida's husband, the chemist Ludwig Mond. The scientist had established the ammonia soda industry in England, and was thus one of the country's leading industrialists. The profits from the soda empire enabled the triumvirate to enjoy a feudal lifestyle. The Palazzo Zuccari in Rome not only became their winter residence, but their second home.

The Renaissance palace, whose main portal is in the form of a monstrous orifice, looms above the Spanish Steps, wedged between the Via Sistina and the Via Gregoriana. In line with the concept of its builder, the painter and architect Federico Zuccari, the monster-like gateway was intended to "swallow up" visitors and then "disgorge them" in a hidden, paradisiacal garden behind the façade. The palace that Zuccari built at the end of the 16th century was intended to serve as both his residence and studio – in an area that was, back then, still undeveloped, as the street names, Capo le Case ("where the houses end") and Via delle Fratte ("street of brambles"), indicate.

In his will, Zuccari decreed that his studio was to be used as a "meeting place for painters, sculptors and architects of the Academy, as well as for distinguished scholars of fine literature." The other chambers, conversely, should serve as "quarters for poor students of my profession (...) And these poor young men, if they so desire, should pursue their studies here, and not be forced to leave for six months and one year (...)."

Unfortunately, however, the young students were not to enjoy this privilege, as the building and associated costs drove the extravagant artist to ruin. At the time of his death, the building was still unfinished; later, prominent figures such as the archaeologist Johann Joachim Winckelmann and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, would be frequent guests here.

Henriette Hertz, initially tenant and, from 1904, owner of the Palazzo Zuccari, turned the lavishly furnished rooms into the social hub of Rome's artistic world. Her salon played host to a "colorful crowd of (...) foreigners from all nations," united by their love of the city and for the fine arts. Every week, scientists, artists, collectors and Italophiles gathered for discussions and to attend lectures, readings and concerts.

"Evening, 21:30 h at Miss Hertz," wrote archaeologist Ludwig Pollak in his diary. "A large, illustrious crowd. I met Siegfried Wagner. Extraordinary similarity to the old man (Wagner). Tremendously enjoyable evening." The hostess' social events were also devoted to the tradition that Lucullus had established here almost 2,000 years earlier: Theodor Mommsen, classical scholar and literature Nobel Prize winner, greatly appreciated not only the intellectual delights, but also the outstanding food and superb wines served at the Hertz residence.

Henriette Hertz's role was, however, in no way limited to that of a witty salonière. Together with Frida and Ludwig Mond, she supported students, scientists and artists, and invested in educational opportunities for women and in childcare. Early on, she developed a passion for collecting and, in addition to paintings, amassed a comprehensive collection of art historical books and photographs. Furthermore, she was a translator and was also devoted to writing.

#### KÖLNISCHE ZEITUNG FROM JANUARY 24, 1935

» Henriette Hertz filled the ancient palace with gleaming splendor and new life (...) The house of the spirited woman, who loved everything that was beautiful and refined, was not only a much sought-after place of respite and inspiration for her friends, but many of them also enjoyed generous backing and support for life's material needs.«

As early as 1878, her novel *Alide* was published under the pseudonym Harry Hertz. It contained the words: "The most fateful moment in life. The life of a woman is marriage, and like the crisis of a protracted illness it rarely develops into good, stable health, but often into wretched wasting away." For the author of these lines, the risk was obviously too great – she would remain unmarried her entire life.

Henriette Hertz's close friendship with the art historian and Michaelangelo specialist Ernst Steinmann, who she had met in Florence in 1894, was of decisive importance for the founding of the Bibliotheca Hertziana. In a letter to Steinmann she wrote: "The establishment of this library is the fulfillment of my life-long wish (...) to maintain and support, also for the future, art historical research, especially of the Renaissance period." In keeping with the

tradition of her salon – where what counted were mutual interests, rather than background, gender or social standing – men as well as women, regardless of their nationality, should come together "in total freedom and independence" and dedicate their efforts to the research of art and culture, starting with the Renaissance." Her own difficult situation was a pivotal factor here: Henriette Hertz often lamented the fact that women encountered difficulties in accessing libraries.

During the founding phase of the institute, Ernst Steinmann served as consultant and took on diverse organizational tasks. Henriette Hertz discussed book acquisitions with him, and left negotiations with third parties to his discretion. She ultimately appointed Ernst Steinmann as lifetime director. There was one point, however, where he did not live up to the founder's expectations: with the allocation of user passes, the "administrative body proceeded with a certain severity and sought to ward off, when possible, dilettantish elements." For the director, this meant above all the large number of "female art history students."

In October 1912, on the occasion of the 10th international art historian congress, the Bibliotheca Hertziana opened its doors

for the first time to scientists from all over the world. The following January, the institute began its research activities. Henriette Hertz, who had already been ill for a long time, died on April 9, 1913 at the age of 66. According to the terms of her will, her painting collection went to the Italian government; the Palazzo Zuccari and its annex, the entire library holdings, the Fototeca (photographic collection) and endowment capital in the form of securities passed to the Kaiser Wilhelm Society.

Thanks to her endowment, Zuccari's wish to foster young academics finally became a reality: the Bibliotheca Hertziana, which is one of the institutes of the Max Planck Society, offers future art historians the ideal conditions to pursue their doctoral or postdoctoral work.

The foundation for the Bibliotheca Hertziana included around 5,000 books and 12,000 photos from the founder's estate. In the meantime, the library's inventory has grown to over 250,000 books and 800,000 photos – and continues to grow. The new building by the Spanish architect Juan Navarro Baldeweg, which is currently being erected in the courtyard of the Palazzo Zuccari, is expected to be completed in 2011, thanks to the generous support of several patrons, and will provide ample space for the abundance of art historical treasures.

The building is also intended to be a reminder of the 2,000-year history of the location: during construction, a mosaic-covered wall of a Roman nymphaeum was discovered – part of Lucullus' legendary garden villa. A glass wall in the book stacks will allow visitors to inspect the mosaic – and call to mind the famous gourmet and founder of the first library on Monte Pincio.



A native of Cologne with an appreciation for art: With her valuable collections of art historical books and photography, Henriette Hertz laid the cornerstone for the Bibliotheca Hertziana.