

PALAZZO TURINETTI

Intesa Sanpaolo's new museum headquarters in Piazza San Carlo, Turin

Gallerie d'Italia – Turin, Museo di Intesa Sanpaolo

Elegant, linear and sober on the outside; rich in stucco, decorations and fine furnishings on the inside.

This is the “double face” of Palazzo Turinetti, home to the management team of the Istituto Bancario San Paolo di Torino since 1963 and now the registered office of Intesa Sanpaolo (resulting from the merger in 2007 of two major Italian banks, Banca Intesa and Sanpaolo IMI).

The historical part of this large, quadrilateral-shaped building overlooks the central Piazza San Carlo, “Turin’s living room”. From the windows the eye is drawn to the monument in the centre of the square, the so-called “Caval’d brôns”. It is the equestrian statue of Duke Emanuele Filiberto, placed there in 1838. It commemorates the end of the French occupation of Turin, thanks to the victory of San Quintino and the rise of the city as capital of the Duchy of Savoy, in 1563.

That same year, seven citizens of Turin founded the Compagnia di San Paolo, with the purpose of carrying out charity work and assisting the poor. The Bank was born from this historic core: Istituto Bancario San Paolo di Torino. Curiously enough, banking and finance have been intertwined from the very beginning with the history of the palace, which was built by Marquis Giorgio Turinetti di Priero, court banker and president of the finances of the Duchy.

At the beginning of the 17th century, Turin underwent radical architectural transformations in order to raise the standards of the capital of the Savoy State to match that of other European courts.

The promoter of this ambitious project was Christine of France, whom history remembers as “Madama Reale”. Its model is its country of origin, the dominant style the Baroque, the architect of reference Carlo di Castellamonte. In this context, in place of some military fortifications present in the area rises Piazza Reale—now known as Piazza San Carlo—surrounded by the palaces of the aristocracy and the twin churches of San Carlo and Santa Cristina. Subsequent embellishments, in line with evolving styles and trends, leave the original symmetrical design largely unchanged.

In 1951 the Istituto Bancario San Paolo di Torino bought Palazzo Turinetti. The parts damaged by the bombings of the Second World War were rebuilt and the adornments restored, using also elements and furniture coming from disused buildings of the same period. The inner courtyard is an excellent vantage point from which to grasp the result of this integration between ancient and modern parts, carried out under the guidance of architects Mario Dezzuti and Arturo Midana.