

## The Bagatti Valsecchi “Artistic Home”

Bagatti Valsecchi: the family name originated in 1824, when Pietro Bagatti was adopted by Baron Lattanzi Valsecchi. In 1842, Pietro, himself, received a hereditary baronetcy from the Austrian Holy Roman Emperor, Ferdinand I, for his excellence as a renowned miniaturist.

The Bagatti family purchased the mansion on via Gesù in 1745, and began to enlarge it, buying up adjacent lots, and decorating it in the then popular Eclectic style in which the style of each room was chosen according to its function. The stairway and gallery of arms, having been completed just prior to Pietro's wife's death in 1880, are the only two areas of the house still in the Late Baroque style, chosen to impress the visitor with the wealth and “Milanese-ness” of the family. Pietro's sons, Fausto and Giuseppe, responsible for the house as we know it, today, were born in 1843 and 1845, respectively. Both had law

degrees, and participated fully in the cultural and artistic life of Milan's wealthy aristocracy. After their mother died, they refurbished the rest of the family home—where the museum has its seat on the first floor—in the Renaissance style, to evoke the lives of Renaissance princes, to honor the newborn Italian nation, and to affirm their family's ancient history, even if only recently ennobled.

The façade on via Santo Spirito was completed in 1883. The brothers restyled their house using Italian Renaissance antiques and art they purchased and adapted. They also fit their home with then new comforts, such as electricity, hot and cold running water, and central air heating, but masked them in a Renaissance style of their own design, so as not to break the precociously unified environment, thus evoking an ancient noble family home.

The Bagatti Valsecchi brothers' overall plan was completed by the 1895 construction of the mansion in the fifteenth century style on the opposite side of via Santo Spirito. Together with their home, it defined a small private square called “The Bagatti Valsecchi site,” a fine example of period urban planning on a small scale.

In 1974, at the heirs' behest, the mansion was sold to the Region of Lombardy with the proviso that the museum—managed by a non-profit foundation established at the same time to care for this very special home and its collections, preserving them as an indivisible whole made up of Italian Renaissance art and decorative arts still found in their original nineteenth century settings, and to share them with the public—remain. Thus, the Bagatti Valsecchi Museum is an authentic “time capsule” of turn-of-the-century Milanese aristocratic taste and art collecting.

