

## Parravicini House

Until the arrival of the Spanish, the city had no noble “palaces” as such. The elegant and sober dwellings of the leading Milanese families were “noble houses” (“Case da nobile”), not palaces. Which is what many still prefer to call them today.

They had neither the pomp of the Venetian nor the imposing proportions of the Roman palace. More richly decorated inside than outside and rising only two stories above street level, almost all the noble houses boasted deliciously luxuriant gardens, many of them hanging gardens, overlooking the canals.

In the years of Leonardo da Vinci’s sojourn there, Milan was a city formed by the harmonious expanse of more or less prestigious brick buildings that bore witness to the success of the Bramante school of architecture. “Everywhere the gloomy medieval towers are being demolished to make way for the roundness of the round arch,” while building fronts were exuberantly decked out with terracotta ornaments and magnificent frescoes. Being located just a stone’s throw from the cathedral building site and Corte Vecchia, the Parravicini house would certainly have been one of the buildings beheld by da Vinci.

Legend has it that this noble lineage “originates from a hero called Paravicino, secret advisor to Charlemagne at the time of his coronation in Italy, one of the Twelve Paladins of his entourage, who were called the Peers.” True or not, the Valtelinesi counts of Caspano resided in this house in Milan in the 15th century, which is when its foundation stone was laid and it is first mentioned in the historical record. The façade is adorned with twisted mouldings, graceful flattened arch windows, and decorative fragments of excellent craftsmanship; on the first floor, two rooms with original coffered ceilings and a balcony survive, and currently serve as the seat of the Carriero Foundation.

**Via Cino Del Duca 4**

**photos Margherita Gnaccolini  
text M. Alessandra Filippi**