

The Uffizi Gallery, Florence

■ Commission

The great building of the Uffizi Galleries is one of the most significant examples of the 16th century Italian architecture. Shortly after 1550, the building was commissioned by Cosimo I de' Medici, first Grand Duke of Tuscany, to the architect and painter Giorgio Vasari to house the 'Uffizi', the administrative and legal offices of Florence. The new building replaced part of the old medieval town with an imposing construction unlike anything else in the area.

■ Design

Architect Giorgio Vasari adopted a classical style, Doric, including many innovative features in its architecture: the structure is constructed from a series of modules, each with three stories visible on the façade: the *portico* (arched colonnade), the *piano nobile* (main floor) and the *loggia* (covered gallery). The architect's innovation and modern design can be seen in the complete freedom employed for the rooms of the '*piano nobile*', where there is no relation between the interiors and the outer façade. The interior rooms are different sizes, disregarding the regularity of the windows which are instead arranged according to the facades.

■ Further additions

Cosimo I requested the addition of an elevated passage, which is still used today, between the new building and Palazzo Vecchio. In March 1565, on the occasion of the marriage between Francesco I and Joanna of Austria, another elevated passageway was built between the Uffizi and Pitti Palace, known as the 'Vasari Corridor'. This "aerial route" was reserved to the court for three centuries and opened to the public in 1865.

■ Completion of the construction

After the deaths of Cosimo I and Vasari in 1574, works were well underway and were completed shortly afterwards by Francesco I and his architect Bernardo Buontalenti in 1580.

■ From noble palace to museum

It was the Grand Duke Leopold I who gave the Uffizi its status as a museum in the 18th century and opened it to the public. The Uffizi Gallery has a comprehensive collection of Florentine paintings, among these the works by Sandro Botticelli are quite extraordinary.

■ Latest transformations

A car-bomb explosion in 1993 killed six people and seriously damaged parts of the gallery, though few of its masterworks were harmed. After the bombing, the museum was rebuilt, and over the subsequent decade, an expansion of the Uffizi's gallery space was planned. The 'Nuovi Uffizi' project was begun in 2007, with the goal of doubling the size of the Uffizi's exhibition area. New galleries featuring Dutch, Flemish, French and Spanish artists were opened in 2011, and a series of rooms exhibiting the works of 16th century Tuscan artists were dedicated the following year. It also has antiques, sculpture, and more than 100,000 drawings and prints. Today, the Uffizi is one of the most popular tourist destinations in Italy.



The Uffizi Gallery palace

1 Read the text and complete the chart summing up the main information about the Uffizi Gallery.

1. Client	
2. Reason for the commission of the building	
3. The new building in the urban context	
4. Name of the architect	
5. Features of the architecture	
6. Innovations	
7. 1580	
8. Grand Duke Leopold I	
9. 1993	
10. Aftermaths of the bombing attack	
11. 2007	
12. The Uffizi Gallery today	
13. Artworks at the Uffizi Gallery	

The Uffizi Gallery, internal view

