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The Staircase

History and Theories

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NOTES

2 THE HELICAL STAIR

1. Mary Whiteley (1985, 16) suggests that, contrary to the speculations of Viollet-le-Duc, the stair was square rather than circular, with a solid rather than hollow newel, and without the second stairway that he thought was built within the hollow newel.

2. Lise Bek (1985, 118) argues that Alberti's aversion is a polemical criticism of courtly tradition in that he rejects the stair's (secondary) function as a link between areas of differing importance in the building. She suggests that as a humanist, he opposes an audience ceremonial that limits the doctrine of equality—between host and guest, for example—and advocates (architectural) equality “for a harmonious interrelation between free men.” This might be a more persuasive argument if Alberti was a product of the baroque. In book V, Alberti himself says of the house, “the principal Parts may be allotted to the principal occasions; and the most honorable, to the most honorable.”

3 COMPOSITE STAIRS

1. Wilkinson (1975) details the three stages of development as the first flight was increased from a single bay to a double bay and ultimately to its final three-bay form, under the personal interest of Prince Philip. Covarrubias's stair was designed to occupy five bays rather than the much grander nine bays that were finally built.

2. Wilkinson (1975) discusses these events in considerable detail.

3. Evidence produced in lawsuits of the time “charged that the Cardinal's [Ippolito d'Este's] archaeologist Ligorio showed no respect for private property, that he had owners imprisoned or banished.” David R. Coffin, *The Villa d'Este at Tivoli* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960), 8.

4. Sohm (1985) mentions comparable political activities on stairs of similar form at the Palazzo dei Consoli at Gubbio, the Palazzo dei Priori at Perugia, and the Palazzo Comunale at Cortona.

5. According to McAndrew (1980, 99) Rizzo was a scoundrel who managed to steal some 12,000 of the 80,000 ducats budgeted for construction at the palace.

6. As Wilkinson (1975) has pointed out, the design of this palace has been traditionally attributed to Rocco Lurago. Recent studies suggest that the building may have been designed by Domenico and Giovanni Ponsello.

7. These are but the most important examples in an age of great staircases. One cannot dismiss the particularly rich heritage of northern Italy and Sicily, particularly the villas of Piacenza, Florence, Palermo, and Bologna and the works of Torreggiani, Piacentini, Ruggieri, Silvani, Giganti, and Arrighi (discussed by Wittkower 1968, 390–392, 400).

8. For a fuller discussion on this topic, see Mar-der (1962) and Gillies (1972).

9. For a fuller discussion on this dispute, see Kodre (1983).