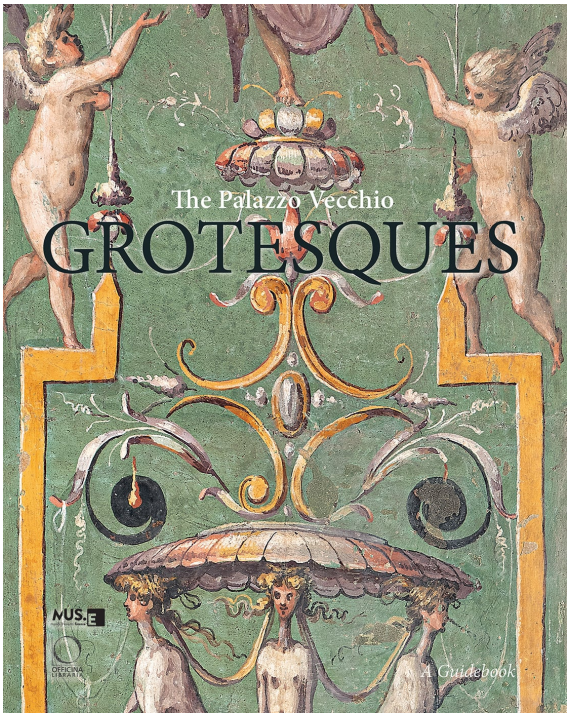
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The Palazzo Vecchio Grotesques

A Guide Book

Valentina Zucchi

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Palazzo Vecchio, which towers over piazza della Signoria, at the center of Florence, is an iconic building and from the Middle Ages to the Medici family to present day it has been the seat of civic power.

Among its most admired features are the marvelous grotesque decorations which animate the walls and vaults of the courtyard and several rooms. Grotesques are a type of wall decoration, in stucco or fresco, often with the addition of gold, that developed in the Renaissance when the vaults of the Domus Aurea in Rome, which were underground (considered grottos hence the name), were rediscovered by artists who drew inspiration from those designs.

Palazzo Vecchio's grotesques are lively, extravagant ornaments, generated by the creativity of artists – among whom Ridolfo del Ghirlandaio (1483-1561) and Marco Marchetti da Faenza (ca. 1526-1588) stand out – and they include, birds, flowers, vegetation and many strange creatures that have a mixture of human and animal traits.

Valentina Zucchi is an art historian and in Florence she works for MUS.E, the city's company that manages the Musei Civici Fiorentini. She is director of the Museo delle Terre Nuove in San Giovanni Valdarno (Arezzo).

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