

## RENAISSANCE ARCHITECTURE

The clarity and precise geometry of central perspective mirrors the interest of Italian Renaissance artists and architects for [Classical Roman examples](#).

The **Renaissance revival** of ancient Roman culture was very important for architecture because provided Renaissance artists with **practical building techniques** (arches, domes, vaults) and a repertoire of **decorative elements** that was forgotten in Middle Age. Columns and capitals of the different orders, pilasters, pediments, entablatures ended up forming the fundamental vocabulary of Renaissance buildings and of Western architecture in general. As in the Classical world, Renaissance architecture is characterized by harmonious form, mathematical proportion, symmetry, predominant use of regular geometries such as circle and square, and a unit of measurement based on the [human scale](#).

During the Renaissance, architects trained as humanists helped raise the status of their profession from skilled laborer to artist by writing treatises inspired by the example of Vitruvius, the only Roman architectural theorist whose writings are extant.



Raphael, *School of Athens*, fresco, 1509-1511, Stanza della Segnatura, Papal Palace, Vatican



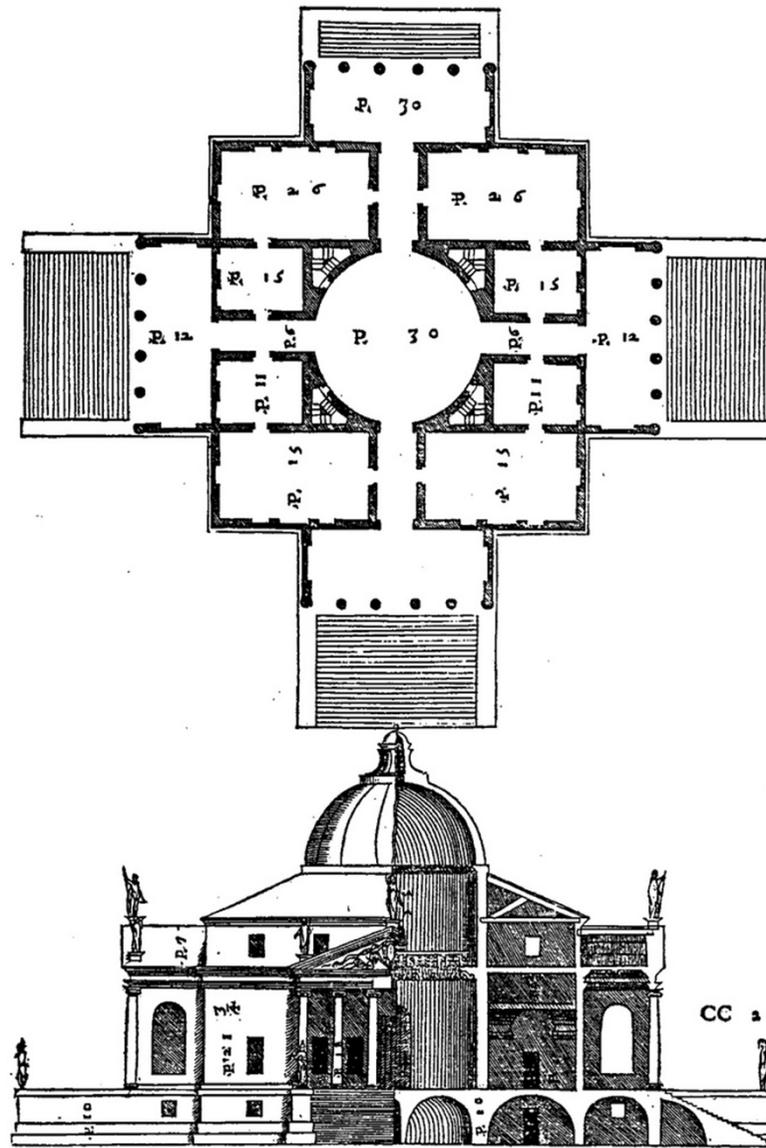
Raphael, *Ospedale degli Innocenti*, fresco, 1419, Florence

## **Brunelleschi**

Filippo Brunelleschi (1377–1446) is widely considered the first Renaissance architect. Trained as a goldsmith in his native city of Florence, Brunelleschi soon turned his interests to architecture, traveling to Rome to study ancient buildings. Among his greatest accomplishments is the engineering of the dome of Florence Cathedral (Santa Maria del Fiore, also known as the Duomo). He was also the first since antiquity to use the classical orders [Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian](#) in a consistent and appropriate manner. Although Brunelleschi's structures may appear simple, they rest on an underlying system of proportion. Brunelleschi often began with a unit of measurement whose repetition throughout the building created a sense of harmony, as in the Ospedale degli Innocenti (Florence, 1419). This building is based on a modular cube, which determines the height of and distance between the columns, and the depth of each bay.



Andrea Palladio, *Villa «La Rotonda»*, 1570, Vicenza



Andrea Palladio, *Villa «La Rotonda»*, 1570, Vicenza

## Palladio

Andrea Palladio (1508–1580) was the chief architect of the Venetian Republic, writing an influential treatise, *I quattro libri dell'architettura* (*Four Books on Architecture*, 1570). Due to the new demand for [villas](#) in the sixteenth century, Palladio specialized in private houses, although he also designed two beautiful and impressive churches in Venice, San Giorgio Maggiore (1565) and Il Redentore (1576). Palladio's villas are often centrally planned, drawing on Roman models of country villas. The Villa Emo (Treviso, 1559) was a working estate, while the Villa Rotonda (Vicenza, 1566–70) was an aristocratic refuge. Both plans rely on classical ideals of symmetry, axiality, and clarity. The simplicity of Palladian designs allowed them to be easily reproduced in rural England and, later, on southern plantations in the American colonies.

## Architecture and Painting

Most of Renaissance architects were painters too: Michelangelo, Raffaello Sanzio and Bramante are just some of the most famous one. In general, the two disciplines were strictly connected as you can see in the incredible work of architecture invented by [Masaccio in his Holy Trinity](#) for example. Perspective allowed painters to visualize in a very realistic manner buildings that did not exist, but that were useful to create a powerful setting for religious or secular scenes by showing off the culture of the painter while pleasing the eyes of the cultivated humanists who were looking at the paintings.



Titian, *Madonna of the Pesaro Family*, 1519-1526, Church of S. Maria Gloriosa dei Frari, Venice