

## David Cotterrell: Il Palazzo Delle Liberta

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The current use of the Palazzo delle Papesse as a contemporary art centre, after years as headquarters of the Bank of Italy, represents a return to a cultural vocation already expressed, in days of yore, by some of its previous, illustrious owners. Amongst these is the Piccolomini lineage, responsible for the foundation of the Palazzo. The palace's curious denomination derives from the sisters of the pope Pius II. Its actual erection, however, was due to only one of them, Caterina. The subsequent occupiers of the palace were the Pieri Piccolomini, Caterina's direct descendants. In 1460 date of the first documents regarding the palace Caterina was already widowed, with two daughters. One of them, Antonia, married Bartolomeo Pieri, later adopted by Antonia's uncle, the pope, in order to ensure that a direct Piccolomini descendant could be born from the union. The Todeschini branch of the Piccolomini family descended from the other sister, Laudomia. In her case, Enea Silvio adopted her husband, Nanni. Two of their children, Jacopo and Andrea, would later be responsible for the building of the other family palace in Banchi di Sotto, only slightly later than the first, known in those days as the "Palazzo del Papa" or "Dei Papeschi". We do not know with any certainty when the building started to be called by its current designation. It is not clear, either, why it alludes to both the sisters. However, it is certain that at the end of the 15th century it is mentioned as "Caterina's" palace, while towards the middle of the following century it appears referred to as the palace "del e Papesse".

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Book Cover (2003)