

Porta Pia

Begun in 1562 by Michelangelo and his assistants, the gateway of Porta Pia was not completed until 1853, with the erection of the penthouse. However, as can be seen from the plans and from a sixteenth century engraving that reproduces Michelangelo's design, the structure maintains the spirit of the original idea. The deliberate overturning of the syntax of ancient architecture is evident in the broken curved pediment set inside a triangular pediment, in the whimsical blind windows, in the decorations of the upper fascia, and in the battlements that support the balls, the heraldic emblem of the pope who commissioned the gate. But what is most surprising about the work is its overall structure: it is a screen with no thickness, and this lack of a third dimension allows it to be regarded as a simple piece of ornamental scenery for the general redevelopment of the Via Pia.