

Biblioteca Laurenziana

Michelangelo did not supervise the realization of the whole work, which was constructed to his plans by other architects over the course of many years. The Biblioteca Laurenziana or Laurentian Library is made up of a reading room and a vestibule (or repository) containing a monumental staircase. The vestibule has a solemn architecture in which the gray of the framework of *pietra serena* stands out against the white walls. Sturdy coupled columns are embedded in the wall, which is decorated with blind window frames and other elements to create a highly suggestive effect. The staircase, which was a great architectural innovation, was executed by Bartolomeo Ammannati in 1559. It has a tripartite structure and the curved steps in the middle alternate with straight ones at the side, which join together in the final part. Both Michelangelo and Ammannati wanted to build it out of wood, but Cosimo I decided to use longer-lasting *pietra serena*. The reading room, which takes its inspiration from that of the monastery of San Marco, is given a dignified appearance by the pilaster strips of gray stone. However, it is brought to life by the harmonious coffered ceiling, the benches of limewood, and the flooring of red and white terracotta that echoes the pattern of garlands and bucranes on the ceiling.