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The Laurentian Library in Florence, designed by Michelangelo for the Medici pope Clement VII. www.bmlonline.it

THE WISDOM IN SIMPLICITY

Architect Elliott Barnes finds inspiration in a Mannerist Michelangelo masterwork.

ITALY PHOTO © ANDREA JEMOLO / BRIDGEMAN IMAGES

"I first visited Michelangelo's Laurentian Library in 1983, after having studied it at Cornell. It's a very small space in the Basilica di San Lorenzo in Florence, constructed in the 1500s. The way the room plays with scale is what intrigues me most. There are these very formal architectural elements like scrolls, pediments, and niches; the stairs spill out from the library as if suggesting that knowledge is being offered to everyone. The Mannerist period-between the Renaissance and the Baroque-in which it was built has definitely influenced my work. And the room is in only two materials. By being very simple in one way and articulate in another, it is remarkably modern." - As told to Camille Okho