



UNIVERSITY OF BRESCIA

PORTRAYAL OF THE ANCIENT BUILDINGS



PALAZZO MARTINENGO PALATINI
Piazza Mercato, 15 BRESCIA



Located on the western side of Piazza del Mercato, this Palace was built by Count Teofilo Martinengo III between 1672 and the start of the 18th century, on the old basement and remains of the Gambara family's houses, and includes the ruins of a medieval tower.

The project was entrusted to Lazzaro Bracco, the favourite architect of noble families at that time and the author of Palazzo Tosio Martinengo (now a picture gallery) and Palazzo Martinengo delle Palle (now hosting the Architects and Lawyer's professional associations).

The finishing and stone work were entrusted to Bernardo Fedrighini, the architect who designed the facade of Church of San Faustino. The halls of the piano nobile (now the offices of the Rector of the University of Brescia) were decorated in 1714 by Giulio Quaglio, a master sculptor of European renown from Val d'Intelvi.

Framed by stucco decorations of great elegance, the wall medallions in the main hall portray scenes from Greco – Roman mythology, while the ceiling represents an allegorical narration of the glorious feats of Ercole Martinengo Palatini, an illustrious ancestor of the family.



The palace remained the property of Martinengo Palatini until 1874, when it was left to the Town of Brescia, which first destined it to host the Food and Hygiene administration boards (respectively, Annona and Igiene) and then the Venturi Music Institute. Then, this historic residence became the property of INAIL (the Italian National Institute for Insurance against Accidents at work), who radically transformed the wing overlooking Via Porcellaga.

On that occasion the road was substantially enlarged to construct the straight provided for by Piacentini's Town Planning, in which Palazzo Martinengo Palatini was identified as a national monument.

The western facade and part of the side elevations acquired the characteristics of Rationalist monumental architecture from the early 1930s.

The author of this transformation and of the octagonal spiral staircase was architect Carlo Calzecchi Onesti, at the time superintendent of Historic Monuments and Architectural Heritage in Milan.

In 1944 an air raid caused major collapses, mainly to the old southern building that faced out on to the piazza. The structure and wall decoration of the Salone maggiore (main hall) suffered serious damage, this hall was then restored according to the methods in use at that time by G. Mozzoni. In later post – war years, the master Italian decorators Trainini and Cominelli contributed to the vaults in the halls of the piano nobile and staircase of honour.

The salone maggiore – main hall - , after the recent restorations, is recommended as an excellent place to visit on the cultural path of grand Baroque decoration within the Imperial Courts from beyond the Alps.



PALAZZO BETTONI CAZZAGO
Via Gramsci, 17 – Brescia



During the early decades of the 16th century, following destruction of that portion of the Viscontean city walls that completely occupied the current ribbon of Via Gramsci, the cleared areas were sold to private citizens by a proper and decorous street to connect the monumental spaces of the convent of San Domenico to Piazza del Mercato del Lino.

Therefore, in 1534 the area of the future Palazzo Cazzago was recorded under the name of Bernardino Soldo a descendant of the chronicler Cristoforo Soldo.

At the end of the 16th century the Soldos organised the renovation of the old houses located around the courtyard with the Doric – Tuscan double colonnade designating the north wing to Bernardino's family and the south wing to the clergyman Carlo.

In 1686 the building was sold to the Albani family from Bergamo, who rented the property per lot until the middle of the following century and never lived in the Palazzo.

After decades of poor maintenance and consequent deterioration, the building was purchased by the Cazzago noble family from Cazzago San Martino, who undertook a plan of restoration and reform from 1765 onwards so as to make the old building the most prestigious mansion of “ Strada Larga”, now Via Gramsci.

The rearrangement of the front, the elevation of the “Sala delle feste” (party hall), the new staircase and the magnificent decoration of the first floor are still today the most outstanding features in the building.



The building was sold in 1907 to the Municipality of Brescia, which then used it as the headquarter of the Regie Poste, the Royal Post Service.

The building, then, passed into the hands of the University of Brescia and has since that time been skilfully restored.

The entrance opens onto a scenic view of extraordinary grace and tidiness.

The main building is occupied by noble rooms, which are richly decorated with “Capriccios” portraying perspective views of classical Roman architecture and Baroque staircases.

Saverio Gandini is the author of the decoration of the vault in the foyer of the piano nobile.



MONASTERY OF SAN FAUSTINO Via San Faustino, 74/B



The cloisters, the church and the Monastery of San Faustino Maggiore originally belonged to a cenoby of Benedictine monks which dated back to the 10th century and was linked to the presence of the ancient Church of Santa Maria in Silva.

The renovation of the Monastery began in the Renaissance period with the construction of the Ionic entrance cloister known as “Chiostrò della Campanella” (cloister of the little bell, dated 1501) by Bernardino Martinengo.

During the Thirties of the 16th century, the greater cloister was built, which is also known as “Chiostrò delle due colonne” (cloister of the two columns), designed by architect Andrea Moroni.

During the second half of the same century, the “Chiostrò della porta” (the gate cloister) was divided into two equal areas, of which the downstream was transformed into the “Cortile dell’Abate” (the Abbot’s courtyard).

The transformation made by the architect Gio Maria Piantavigna is underlined by the ionic porch in late Renaissance style of the Abbot’s courtyard and the decoration of the vault in the “Sala dei Mantici”- the hall that previously hosted the pharmacy of the convent with frescos by Lattanzio Gambara, which were later praised by Giorgio Vasari in 1550.

In the mid-sixteenth century a series of transformation begun in the Church of San Faustino, on the outline of the old Romanesque temple, of which only part of the foundations was conserved, under the chancel. The reconstruction of the sacred building during the seventeenth century, first saw the introduction of the prestigious decorative backgrounds of the nave and aisles, and then, in the mideighteen century, the picturesque works by Gian Domenico Tiepolo in the chancel area and in the Abbot's residence, which now hosts the offices of the Department of Economics and Management. Important fragments of the work by the venetian master are also found in one of the cells on the corridor (more than 100 m. long) of the first floor of the monk's dormitory (west wing of the greater cloister).



On the same floor as the garden there were functional spaces for the community life (kitchens, infirmary, chapter hall, barbershop, stockrooms, etc.) and in the north east wing was a majestic refectory which is now the Aula Magna (Auditorium) of the department.



During the seventeenth century the Monastery hosted the study of the celebrated physician and mathematician Benedetto Castelli, which included the hall of the Monastery's library , which is now the library of the Department. The architectural layout of the Monastery fell into a big disrepair when in 1798 it was designated as a lancers barrack.

At the end of the 1980s the State property Agency transferred the Monastery to the University of Brescia, which since then carried out systematic recovery and restoration works.



MONASTERY OF SANTA CHIARA Contrada Santa Chiara, 50



The Monastery of Santa Chiara housed Franciscan religious communities of nuns from the thirteen century until the start of the nineteenth century.

In 1508, following the gunpowder explosion of the castle's Coltrina tower overlooking the monastery, the medieval structures were destroyed and the cenoby was painstakingly rebuilt in the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

However, no new work appears to have been carried out until the mid – sixteenth century when in 1556 the implementation of safety measures for the bordering wall in the upper part “Ortaglia” vegetable garden was required to the Comune.

The Mothers repeated this request once again in 1561, due to further stone falls following the completion of the “Rampa del Soccorso” a flight of steps overlooking the Monastery.

In 1568 architect Ludovico Beretta was there to fix the damage caused to the church by weather events.

Beretta also designed the small south western courtyard (formerly the property of the Rodengo family), which was later included in the perimeter of the Monastery.

After the great transformation works performed by the Municipality of Brescia at the start of the twentieth century, the ground floor loggias of the cloisters include seventeenth century Doric Tuscan columns with attic bases, which were typical of the previous periods.



Also of note is the extraordinary scenic staircase designed by Ascanio Girelli, whose ramps are decorated by sculptures by the Callegari brothers.

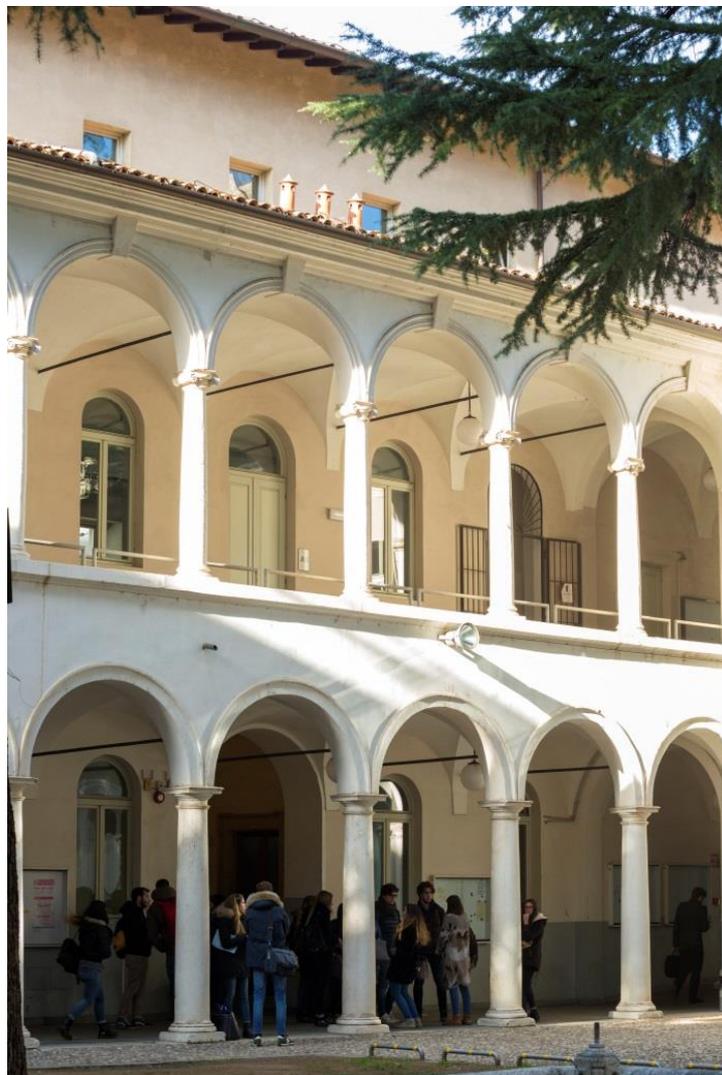
These sculptures positioned at the top of Girelli's perspective really stand out.

The top aedicule, almost neoclassical in design, hosts within its niches marble statues representing St. Clare (headless), St. Francis, St. Bonaventure and two beautiful cherubs, which are known works of Alessandro Callegari, signed and dated 1755.

After its suppression, the Monastery was used as a female boarding school and then housed the first Municipal Drawing School.

The ex Franciscan convent, after a radical alteration, later became a vocational school.

Over the centuries, the Monastery was affected by continuous reworking, the only parts that have remained unaltered are the monumental perspective staircase , the porticoes of the great southern Doric Cloister, the porticoes on the entrance side of the building and section of the smaller courtyard.



PALAZZO CALINI AI FIUMI
Via delle Battaglie, 58 Brescia



Built close to two converging old city waterways - Bova and Dragone – Palazzo Calini ai Fiumi is the end product of a centuries - old settling of several buildings.

The Palace was acquired by a noble family of Brescia: the Calinis and during the course of their stewardship underwent several renovations.

The Palace, which laid its foundations at the top of the early Town Hall's circular embankment at the very start of the 15th century, was brought about through the vision of the Avogadro family.

We can still find Gothic halls from the Avogadros' original residence, of which the one on the ground floor (now a study room of the Department of Law), showcasing a distinctive horseshoe – arched doorway on Vicolo dell'Anguilla, served as “portico delle ferrarezze” (iron forging portico).

Notably, it was here where the courageous Brescian conspirators reunited against the French occupation in 1512.

The Calinis purchased the east – facing side of the larger courtyard from the Avogadros and ordered the construction of a beautiful Ionic loggia in proto – Renaissance style attributable to Stefano Lamberti. The building on the north side of the courtyard housed the stable and storehouses.

In 1991, renovation works revealed the ruins of a great city wall, which were underneath this building and concealed by the small rear garden.

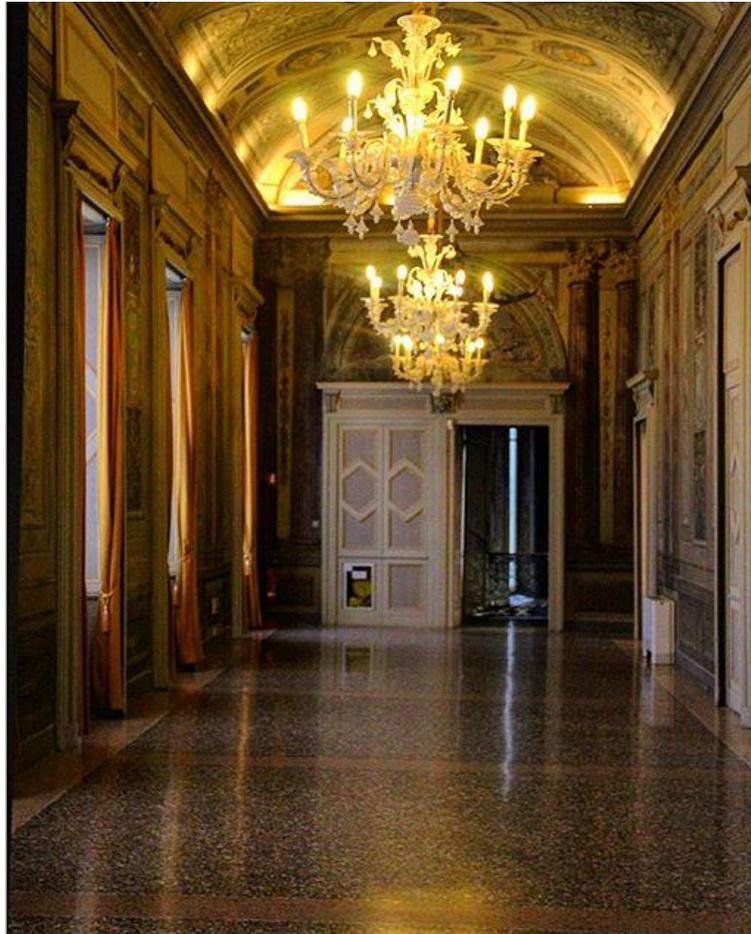
This city wall had constituted the western boundary at the time of the city 's first expansion. This finds now mark the longitudinal axis of the underground Aula Magna (Auditorium).

The building facing towards Via Battaglie was instead renovated by the Calinis in the mid 16th century. The incorporation of the 17th century courtyard by the Girelli family (the south west portion of the palace) then made it possible a general reorganization of the western building with the construction of an unsparing apartment later known as “Appartamento del Cardinale” (the Cardinal Apartment) with reference to monsignor Lodovico Calini.

The succession of halls on the piano nobile represents an early example of the Baroque – neoclassical style.

The decoration of these rooms, between 1780 and 1783, involved several figure painters and quadrature painters, including Sante Cattaneo, Giovanni Manfredini and his son Giuseppe a team of excellent decorators from Valle d’Intelvi, as well as Saverio Gandini and Pietro Scalvini from Brescia, to completion among others , the “Sala delle prospettive” (Perspective Hall) a true architectural gem depicting illuminated landscapes and mythological symbols in a sequence of neoclassical grotesqueries and capriccios in the style of Roman architecture.

The portion of the building on the corner between Via Battaglie and via Nino Bixio a legacy by the Girellis, including a small monumental courtyard and a fountain with neo – Egyptian motifs, is today the most unitary and coherent part of the palace, both architecturally and stylistically with venetian rooftop loggia that dominates the city’s skyline.



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