

THE PORTICOES OF BOLOGNA – A WORLD HERITAGE PROPERTY

The Porticoes of Bologna were entered in the UNESCO World Heritage List on 28 July 2021. It is a serial property composed of 12 groups of porticoes and the surrounding edified areas, located inside the Municipality of Bologna, and existing since the 12th century. Defined as private property open for public use, these sets of porticoes became an expression and an element of the urban identity of Bologna.

UNESCO

The series of Bologna porticoes, selected in the context of the portico system found all around the historic city and significantly present in the modern city, peerlessly represents an ancient, widespread architectonic style. Never abandoned or neglected down the years, it remains in continuous evolution across the historic phases of the urban transformations. Displaying several chronological, stylistic and functional variations, the series are a perfect example of a kind of building style based on porticoes in common use in the civil housing of the working classes and in aristocratic residences, in public and religious buildings, developed from the 12th century to the present. A wide range of materials and styles was employed, and has survived until today as an intrinsic feature of a city that grows and changes over time.

UNESCO is the acronym for United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation. Created in Paris on 4 November 1946, it is a United Nations special agency that grew out of the awareness that political and economic agreements are not sufficient to build a long-lasting peace: rather, peace should be based on education, science, culture and collaboration among nations. The purpose of UNESCO is to ensure universal respect for justice, law, human rights and the fundamental liberties that the Charter of the United Nations establishes for all peoples, irrespective of ethnicity, gender, language or religion. UNESCO is committed to building the underlying conditions that will guarantee peace and prosperity for people of all nations, by promoting cross-cultural dialogue, respect for the environment and the best practices for Sustainable Development. It does so by pursuing the following objectives:

- Promoting education, so that every child, boy and girl can have access to quality education as a fundamental human right and as an essential requirement for the development of personality;
- Building cross-cultural comprehension, also by protecting and safekeeping the properties of exceptional value and beauty included in the World Heritage list;
- Pursuing scientific cooperation to strengthen the bonds between nations and society, in order to monitor and prevent environmental catastrophes and to better manage the planet's water resources;
- Protecting freedom of expression as an essential condition to guarantee democracy, development and the safeguarding of human dignity.

UNESCO is presently working to create holistic policies to tackle social, environmental and economical problems from a Sustainable Development perspective, by means of programmes to promote cross-cultural dialogue, universal access to the new information

and communication technologies and the dissemination of scientific knowledge, in order to prevent the negative effects of climate change.

For additional information: <http://en.unesco.org/about-us/introducing-unesco>

WORLD HERITAGE

On November 16, 1972, the World Heritage Convention was ratified in Paris, as the *Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage*. It was the first official international instrument to unite the notions of protection of nature and preservation of cultural assets, and was acknowledged as a necessary and fundamental element for the development of all societies on earth and for continued peace and solidarity.

The vital objective of the Convention is to safeguard World Heritage so it can be transmitted to all future generations. The Convention establishes the kinds of natural or cultural properties that can be included in the World Heritage List and the obligations of the Convention signatory Countries, known as State Parties, in identifying potential properties. It also defines their role in the protection and safeguarding of such properties.

The World Heritage List is the list of properties that the World Heritage Committee has officially determined as having Outstanding Universal Value – OUV, and that if lost will represent unrecoverable damage for the entire humanity. The Convention pays special attention to the aspects of education and information, because it is only by consolidating people's respect and attachment to cultural and natural heritage that it will be possible to guarantee its conservation.

In order to achieve recognition, each member country of the Convention requests the nomination of their own property. It submits an application, attaching documents and research and a specially drafted dossier to evidence the property's Outstanding Universal Value, in accordance with UNESCO's selection criteria. The World Heritage Centre checks the completeness of the nomination dossier, and, if ascertained, submits it to the World Heritage Committee, which meets once a year to review nominations. The Committee then decides whether to proceed with the property's entry in the World Heritage List.

<https://whc.unesco.org/en/convention>

The identification, protection, safeguarding and transmission to the future generations of all cultural and natural heritage around the world is one of the principal missions of UNESCO.

The Heritage represents the legacy of the past which we now enjoy and will transmit to future generations. Our cultural and natural heritage is an irreplaceable source of life and inspiration. Therefore, unique and diversified places such as the wild expanses of the National Park of Serengeti in East Africa, the Pyramids of Egypt, the Great Barrier Reef of Australia and the baroque cathedrals of Latin America constitute our World Heritage.

UNESCO HERITAGE AROUND THE WORLD

To date, 1157 properties are included in the World Heritage List, of which 900 are cultural, 218 natural and 39 mixed, from 167 countries around the world

To discover them or to learn more about them, access the map in <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/>

UNESCO HERITAGE IN ITALY

Italy is the mostly represented country in the World Heritage List, with 58 properties listed. The Italian National Commission for UNESCO has the purpose of favouring the promotion, connection, divulgation, consultation and execution of UNESCO programmes in Italy. The Commission's site provides information about UNESCO Heritage in our country:

<https://www.unesco.it/it>

UNESCO HERITAGE IN BOLOGNA

The Municipality of Bologna is the reference entity for UNESCO as regards the “The Porticoes of Bologna” property, entered in the World Heritage List on 28 July 2021. The World Heritage Porticoes office was created within it to supervise the execution and the implementation of the Management Plan, coordinate and support the works of the Steering Committee, monitor the conservation status of the property, collaborate with the Ministry of Culture, participate in national and transnational cooperation among the UNESCO World Heritage properties, promote and coordinate studies and research about the Porticoes, prepare proposals and to execute and monitor restoration and valuation projects concerning the components of the property.

THE 12 COMPONENTS OF THE PORTICOES OF BOLOGNA

1. SANTA CATERINA AND SARAGOZZA

These porticoes belong to a series of minor residential buildings (modest dwellings with small living spaces) that have maintained the original style and structural model within a social context that has itself remained “popular” and authentic, not having been subject to gentrification.

The architrave porticoes of Santa Caterina are a rare and precious testament to one of the oldest monastic property allotments carried out in one of the most dynamic European medieval cities.

These fragile structures, after surviving the demolition of this area in the 19th and 20th centuries, were carefully restored thanks to the famous Conservation Plan of the Bologna Historic Centre of 1970. Since then, they have been recognised internationally as a benchmark for the safeguarding of historic residential heritage.

The component comprises the entire architectural matrix of a medieval city block. The porticoes, together with their courtyard areas have constantly maintained their use as popular housing since the middle ages. The narrow structures typical of the Gothic period have expanded towards the street to increase the volume of the upper floors.

The portico is a kind of filter space between the street and the ground floor shops, in close symbiosis with the internal courtyards. This relationship is still clearly visible even now.

2. SANTO STEFANO AND MERCANZIA

This component comprises the Santo Stefano Basilica and the surrounding architectural fabric. The ensemble highlights the relationship between the senatorial residential purpose of the palaces and the public purpose of the square, with the portico in between. The three-hundred-year old Palazzo della Mercanzia with its monumental loggia also presents a portico of exceptional architectural value.

The porticoes of the late medieval and renaissance palaces included in this component are expressions of a greatly refined architectural culture, both in their overall design and in their individual old-style constituent architectural elements (columns, bases, capitals, vaults, etc.). The residential, commercial and religious purposes of this component have remained unchanged for more than 800 years. The Palazzo della Mercanzia is now the headquarters of the Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Handicraft and Agriculture of Bologna.

3. GALLIERA

Important senatorial palaces and their porticoes make up part of this component along Via Galliera, once the main street of the Roman city of Bononia, Via Manzoni and the San Colombano complex, which dates from the 7th century and is presently part of the Genus Bononiae Museum.

The 15th and 16th century porticoes show architectural styles that are present only in this area of the city, such as the particular use of the classic orders of the Palazzo dal Monte or the use of a torus to reinforce the entasis of the columns at the Palazzo Bonasoni.

These characteristics reveal the desire of the Bolognese senatorial families to make the portico a strong expressive element of the urban scenario and to create a particular type of

residential environment for the oligarchy that governed the city during the old regime. In this scenario, the porticoes of the residential palaces fostered different forms of urban social exchange and had the purpose of expressing family prestige and magnificence over time.

4. BARACCANO

This component comprises a series of porticoes that intersect at various points. They were built between the 16th and 17th centuries, not only to produce a series of covered promenades, but also to fashion an urban environment characterised by multiple perspectives and strongly scenic telescopic panoramas. Their initial social purpose was public well-being; the modern “civic centre” function of these same buildings is equally inclusive and open to use by the citizenry. They were subsequently noted and studied by many travellers during the old regime. The Sanctuary of Santa Maria del Baraccano is connected to the portico of Via Santo Stefano by the “voltone del Baraccano”. This great vault was also built to create a visual and spatial connection between the portico of the home for poor children and orphans, and the portico attached to the façade of the Sanctuary.

5. PAVAGLIONE, BANCHI AND PIAZZA MAGGIORE

This component comprises one of the most important and best conserved public spaces of medieval origin of all Europe, which was later transformed into a political forum in the renaissance period. It is composed of Piazza Maggiore, Piazza Re Enzo and Piazza del Nettuno with its monumental fountain by Giambologna (16th century).

The long porticoed structure of exceptional architectural value unites all the principal public buildings of Bologna – starting with the medieval renovation of the platea communis – uses a shared formal language. It forms a monumental promenade with architectural characteristics that boldly stand out in the historic city. Of particular importance here are the Pavaglione, the longest continuous portico of Bologna, the Archiginnasio portico, originally the headquarters of the University, and the porticoes of the surrounding structures, which were built to harmoniously connect to it.

The continuation with the past was also preserved in its purposes, which remained substantially unchanged over the centuries.

6. SAN LUCA

The portico of San Luca is an excellent example of the devotional “covered walkway” built in Italy in the baroque period. This component starts in the city and ends at the Sanctuary of the Madonna di San Luca, which was the end of the pilgrimage route: a porticoed uphill road, punctuated by chapels dedicated to the Mysteries of the Rosary, which connects the city walls to the suburban church.

Completed in the first half of the 18th century, it is the longest portico ever built, and has performed its civil and religious purpose continuously for more than three centuries. Additionally, in recent years, the portico, with its distinctive linear character, is frequently used for people who like jogging and walking, and who appreciate the possibility of exercising and walking also in bad weather.

7. UNIVERSITY AND ACADEMY

This component comprises important porticoed academic buildings, as Palazzo Poggi, the Academy of Fine Arts and the Bologna National Art Gallery (former Jesuit novitiate and church of Sant'Ignazio of the 18th century), underlining the historic value of a road that has been the centre of the city's student life for more than 200 years.

The modern urban campus within the walls of Bologna dates from the Napoleonic period and its core corresponds to the perimeter of this component; the principal academic buildings equipped with porticoes can be found inside it. The design of the porticoes as the key feature of Bolognese university architecture dates from the mid-16th century, when it was considered an old-style reworking of the medieval precedents and an evocation of the classic models.

The present university "city" has maintained this design model, identifying the portico as the most powerful bearer of the symbolic values abounding in an entire section of the city. The University's importance in the dissemination of knowledge around the world gave a strong impulse for the emulation of portico models internationally.

8. CERTOSA

The long straight portico that extends from the portico of San Luca to the cemetery of Certosa is a unique example of a sepulchral portico of the modern era. It was designed after the Napoleonic edict of Saint-Cloud, based on the model of the old Roman sepulchral roads, but with the addition of the "covered walkway" typical of Bologna.

The component comprises the historic section of the Certosa, a monument of great international importance due to its long and complex history and its aesthetic features. The internal porticoed cloister, dating from the renaissance period, was recognised from the Napoleonic period onwards as worthy of a modern Bolognese necropolis.

9. CAVOUR, FARINI AND MINGHETTI

The component comprises significant porticoed buildings around Piazza Cavour and Piazza Minghetti. Even after the unification of Italy, Bologna continued to build porticoes on both public and private buildings, designed in accordance with the architectural principles and the regulations of the medieval municipalities. More than in any other 19th century requalification of the historic city, this area presents the reinterpretation of the portico based on consolidated architectural models, which accommodated social requirements and modern lifestyles without losing the bonds with historic tradition.

Particularly, the area of the prestigious financial and commercial structures built along the modern thoroughfare of Via Farini presents an architectural style of clear historic connotation. Here the portico assumes a bourgeois and stately tone, very different of that of the surrounding area; it in fact became a model for the design of porticoed commercial quarters in European cities at the end of the 19th century.

10. STRADA MAGGIORE

Strada Maggiore was already a crucial organisational artery for the city at the end of the Roman period, but it was in the Middle Ages that it became a "mirror" of the urban magnificence of the portico on both sides of the street.

Documentary sources describe it as the “noble” road par excellence thanks to its concentration of stately residences, and as a “triumphal” road due to its role as the “via papalis”; even today a high social tone is perceptible along the entire street.

Throughout its long history, the city has grown along this traffic artery and, therefore, Strada Maggiore presents many episodes of exceptional architectural originality of the portico from the Middle Ages up to the modern age, all testament to its unique history. These include the portico of Casa Isolani, probably the oldest medieval portico still existing in a European city; the portico and the quadruple portico of the Church of Santa Maria dei Servi; and the so-called portico of the Alemanni, the first example of a covered walkway outside the city walls.

11. “IL TRENO DELLA BARCA”

This very long porticoed modern residential construction is a high-quality innovative architectural structure with deep roots in local history. Built according to rigorous functional principles, the “Treno della Barca” is a modern reworking of the traditional Bolognese portico, restoring life to a peripheral zone of the city and making evident its never-ending expressive vitality and identity strength rooted in a secular tradition.

The continuous maintenance of this and of other residential structures of the zone, carried out mostly by its own inhabitants, has protected this peripheral part of the city against degradation, leading it to become a model of social inclusion in addition to architectural excellence.

12. MAMBO

The 20th century portico of the old public bakery, presently the headquarters of MAMbo, Museum of Modern Art of Bologna (one of the most dynamic cultural institutions of the city), documents the persistence of the monumental portico in the great public urban re-qualification works of the beginning of the 20th century in a part of the city historically dedicated to pre-modern industrial activity. The contemporary re-use of this urban area is carried out with the purpose of respectful recovery of the environment.

The component comprises the whole area of the old Porto Navile, recently transformed and re-proposed as a cultural centre (Manifattura delle Arti), where the portico is used as an entrance passage, and above all as a noted centre for cultural socialisation. Inside the component there is an important source of documentation: the archive of the Cineteca di Bologna, one of the most important institutions internationally for the restoration of moving images.