

**JOINT UNESCO-ICOMOS MISSION
TO CITY OF VICENZA AND THE
PALLADIAN VILLAS OF THE VENETO
(ITALY)**

FROM 23 TO 24 MARCH 2005

REPORT

prepared by

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

1. The members of the mission express their gratitude to the Ambassador of Italy to UNESCO. Also express their gratitude to Mr Pasquale Bruno Malara, architect, Superintendent for Cultural Heritage for the Veneto Region, and Mr Manuel Roberto Guido, architect, responsible of UNESCO office of the Italian Ministry of Culture, which organized the meetings of the mission and participated to them, for their availability and assistance which greatly facilitated the work of the mission, and the representatives of the Regional and the scientific institutions involved in the World Heritage site of the City of Vicenza and the Palladian Villas of the Veneto for their explanations on the motivations of the decision of the Region for the construction of the Highway Valdstico Sud.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2. In the framework of decision 28 COM 15B.91 taken by the World Heritage Committee at its 28th session (Suzhou, June/July 2004), the mission considers that the amended construction project of the Highway of Valdstico Sud, reduce the impact on the integrity and the outstanding universal value of the property. Moreover, the mission makes a series of specific recommendations with a view to ensuring an effective protection of the site.

BACKGROUND

3. The property of “**Vicenza, City of Palladio**” was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1994 (at the 18th session of the World Heritage Committee) under cultural criteria C (i) Vicenza represents a unique artistic achievement in the many architectural contributions from Andrea Palladio integrated within its historic fabric and creating its overall character; and

(ii). through its architecture, the city has exerted exceptional influence on architectural and urban design in most European countries and throughout the world.

Twenty-six individual buildings or parts of buildings known to have been designed or reconstructed by Palladio or attributed to him are identified in the nomination - 23 in the city itself and three villas in its immediate environs.

4. The property was extended in 1996 (at the 20th session of the World Heritage Committee) to incorporate 22 Palladian villas.

The State Party included on the proposed extension also the Villa Thiene in Cicogna di Villafranca Padovana but before the 20th session of the World heritage Committee, asked the withdrawal of this Villa from the proposed extension, which is not included in the World Heritage Property.

The name of the property changed to “**The City of Vicenza and the Palladian Villas of the Veneto**”.

As noted in ICOMOS evaluation: “The relationship between the villas and their environments is a fundamental element of Palladio’s designs. Great care needs to be taken to ensure that this is maintained wherever possible and still feasible”.

5. Since December 2002 the World Heritage Centre has received letters from non-governmental organisations and concerned citizens informing about the construction of a partly elevated highway extension of about 54 km (Valdastico Sud) in the vicinity of several Palladian villas. The project provoked a national and international debate as the first Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) disapproved it, but was then approved by political decision. Despite serious concerns the project was finally approved on 18 December 2002 and had to be completed by the end of 2004.

The Centre noted that the planning phase for the construction of the highway extension started already in 1970, but unfortunately this was not mentioned in the nomination dossier as one of the factors affecting the property.

The World Heritage Centre was informed also about uncontrolled construction development in the Veneto region. The State Party was requested to provide their review and comments to the state of conservation of the property.

In a letter of 11 June 2004 the State Party informed the World Heritage Centre, that the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, after consultation with the Ministries of Cultural Heritage and Environment, declared in a decree of 15 May 2004 the compatibility of the project with the environment. It was also noted that, therefore, the works could be authorised by the Ministry of Infrastructures and Transports, with respect to some dispositions and recommendations, and that the Ministry of Cultural Heritage will continue its action for the protection of the World heritage site and the buffer zones.

6. In 2004, at its 28th session, the World Heritage Committee adopted decision 28 COM 15B.91 (cf. Annex I), requesting the States Party to provide full information to the World Heritage Centre about any construction plans of the Highway and strongly urged the State Party to submit details of any building projects which may impact on the property for consideration by the Committee at its 29th session in 2005; The Committee further requested the State Party to prepare a management and conservation plan including measures foreseen to minimize the impact of any development on the integrity of the property;

Finally, the World Heritage Committee requested the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies to undertake a mission to the property, in co-operation with the State Party, to assess and evaluate the potential impact on the outstanding universal value of the property;

7. On 1 February 2005 the State Party transmitted a first Technical Report to the World Heritage Centre. In this report, the Italian Ministry of Culture, made the following observations, with respect to the Committee's decision:

Although the construction of the stretch of Highway (Autostrada) running near Villa Saraceno-Lombardi was scheduled to be completed by the end of 2004, construction had not yet begun.

A new project has been developed, providing for a change to the original project to mitigate its impact on the historic landscape and the Palladian Villa. The new project repositions the infrastructure about 800 metres away.

The revised project reduces in size the Agugliaro junction, to be located 3000 metres from the boundary of Villa Saraceno. It provides for construction of a trench

gallery, covered by soil, under which a sizeable length of the highway would run, making the Highway invisible from the Saraceno-Lombardi Villa, and also from other nearby monuments.

It should be pointed out that the conditions issued by the Regional Authorities approving the project foresee the establishment of a Park stretching from the foot of the Colli Berici to the Euganean Hills. The boundaries of this Park would be very extensive, and would include the Saraceno-Lombardi Villa; this therefore represents a useful instrument for the protection of the site and controlling any adverse impacts caused by development.

In addition, the Land Use Plan of the Municipality of Agugliaro establishes that industrial districts – mainly comprising small enterprises – shall be located in an area at a distance of no less than 3.2 km from the Villa Saraceno, beyond built-up areas.

8. The joint UNESCO/ICOMOS mission requested by the Committee was sent to Italy from 23 to 24 March 2005 in order to:

- In co-operation with the State Party, assess and evaluate the potential impact of construction plans of the highway of Valdistico Sud, which may impact on the integrity and the outstanding universal value of the property.
- Provide a summary report to the World Heritage Centre on its findings considering Operational Guidelines (2005, paragraphs 116, 172-173 and 177-179);
- Formulate a recommendation for the 29th session of the World Heritage Committee, considering the procedures provided in paragraphs 177-175 as 192-198 of the Operational Guidelines (2005).
- Make any other recommendations as appropriate, including capacity building and awareness raising aspects.

9 Composition of the mission team: Anastasia Tzigounaki, UNESCO World Heritage Centre, Europe Unit, Ray Bondin, ICOMOS (Itinerary and programme of the mission: cf. Annex II)

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE MISSION

Construction project of a Highway extension in the vicinity of Villa Saraceno

10. The joint World Heritage Centre-ICOMOS mission took place from 23 to 25 March 2005. The mission visited the site to assess and evaluate the potential impact of the new infrastructure on the outstanding universal value of the property, and to examine its adverse direct and indirect impacts on the authenticity of the site. The mission had meetings with regional and local authorities and the Verona-Vicenza-Padova Highway Corporation. All necessary assistance and information requested were provided by the authorities.

11. The Mayor of Agugliaro informed the mission that the overall Highway project concerned 23 local communities and in 2001 a local referendum had been held in which 73% of the citizens of Agugliaro voted in favour of the proposed new road

12. The proposed Highway project dates back to the 1970s. Part of the Highway, A31, had already been built but this section (Vicenza-Rovigo, known as Valdastico Sud) had been postponed. This Highway is expected to reduce the pressure on the local road SS247. The mission noted that this road was narrow and very heavily used. The existing road is visible from the Villa, at about 220 metres distance, producing constant noise and dirt pollution.

13. The proposed new Highway is in the form of an arch close to other historical buildings protected by Italian law with two different levels of protection. Originally the proposed Highway was much closer to Villa Saraceno, passing at 330 metres distance. The new proposal sets the Highway at 790 metres in a direct line from the Villa. The Highway then passes in the vicinity of other listed buildings, at 490 metres from the Palazzo delle Trombe, and only 100 metres from Villa Saraceno-Dolfin.

14. The design of the Highway, foresees that 2.5 km of the section close to the Villa passes through a 'trench' below street level, at considerable extra cost. On the side of the trench there would be artificial mounts and a line of trees. This would greatly reduce the visual impact of the road. The proposed trench design also includes a noise barrier and a new line of trees on both sides.

15. In the proximity of the Villa Saraceno an Highway over-pass is foreseen, (*Cavalcavia* No 18) and at the other end of the trench, close to Villa Saraceno-Dolfin, a second one is located (*Cavalcavia* No 19). Both over-passes, necessary to connect local roads to the Highway, are very close to the Villa in question. Over-pass No 18 will be in direct visual contact with the Villa. The '*Casello di Agugliaro*', though close, is not visible from the Villa. The toll booths and junction of this part of the Highway will be modified and simplified. The design of these three elements is considered as crucial, and must be as simple and at as low a level as possible. The mission was informed that new simplified designs would be developed and will substantially lower the over-passes.

16. In conclusion, the mission noted that there was no doubt that the State Party was committed to mitigate the impact of the Highway and that the Corporation responsible for the construction of the Highway has taken into consideration the importance of the Villa and has proposed solutions that would reduce the impact of the road. New detailed information has been submitted;

17. The State Party is asked to confirm the information provided verbally to the mission, and mainly:

- (a) The plan of the section of the Highway that will be placed in a trench;
- (b) The design of over-passes Nos 18 and 19, which need to be lowered.
- (c) The design of the *Casello d'Agugliaro*.

Uncontrolled construction development in the Veneto region

18. In the vicinity of Villa Saraceno, in the western adjacent area of the road ss No 247, industrial constructions are located, with adverse impacts to the landscape.

19. The mission was informed that the industrial zone is foreseen to be developed in the region of Campiglia dei Berici. The plan of the Park stretching from the foot of the Colli Berici to the Euganean Hills had been also presented to the mission (cf. Annex III).

Management and planning of the property

20. The representative of the Ministry informed the mission that a Management and Conservation Plan for the World Heritage property were being prepared.

State of Conservation

21. Villa Saraceno is well preserved. The construction of a huge swimming pool in the core zone of the Villa, not visible from outside the perimeter of the Villa, and without legal permission, was reported. Aerial photographic documentation of this construction exists.

Presentation – Interpretation

22. The Villa was closed during mission's visit, and the local authorities complained that the owners of the Villa (The Landmark Trust, a U.K. based non-governmental organisation) on the one hand take State aid and on the other, do not take part in the regional programmes regarding the promotion of the Palladian Villas. There is no plaque with the emblem of World Heritage at this Villa.

23. The important role of the *International Center of Architectural Studies Andrea Palladio*, for the promotion of the Palladian Villas and for the comparative studies on this matter should be noted. The mission had the opportunity to visit the exhibition "*Andrea Palladio, da Petrarca a Carlo Scarpa*".

Other Recommendations

24. The State Party needs to confirm that the Management and Conservation Plan is to be completed by end January 2006;

25. The State Party clearly defines the regions foreseen for the industrial development zones, at a distance from the buffer zones of the Villas of Palladio.

26. The State Party should also control that no illegal development within the property has taken or takes place.

27. Good coordination between the State Party and the owners of several of the Villas is required through an approved management plan, for harmonious public access to allow appreciation of these extraordinary architectural constructions.

28. Plaque with the emblem of the World Heritage should be prepared and implemented, for this Villa and eventually for the other Palladian Villas that are part of the extension of the World Heritage site and have no appropriate signage.

Draft Decision

29. If the World Heritage agrees with the above recommendations, it may wish to adopt a decision along the following lines:

Draft Decision: 29 COM

The World Heritage Committee,

1. *Having examined Document WHC-05/29 COM/7 B,*
2. *Recalling its Decision 28 COM 15B.91, adopted at its 28th Session (Suzhou, China 2004),*
3. *Thanking the State Party for the submission of a detailed technical report,*
4. *Acknowledges the efforts by the State Party to amend the initial Highway construction project;*
5. *Takes note of the results of the UNESCO-ICOMOS mission to the property;*
6. *Requests the State Party to ensure that the management and conservation plan of the area is being finalised by early 2006;*
7. *Further requests the State Party to take measures to prevent any illegal or inappropriate construction within the property;*
8. *Urges the State Party to ensure that a strict control is exerted on land uses in the area surrounding the Villa, in order to avoid urban sprawls or development of industrial constructions that may affect the landscape;*
9. *Further urges the State Party to send to the World Heritage Centre a complete dossier on the project including the design of each component of the infrastructure in the area concerned;*
10. *Requests the State Party to prepare for each of the components of the World Heritage site of **Vicenza and the Palladian Villas of the Veneto** a management and conservation plan including buffer zones and specific measures to protect the historic landscape.*

11. Further requests the State Party to submit a progress report on the implementation of the mission's recommendations and the management and conservation plan for the World Heritage property and its buffer zone to the World Heritage Centre by 1 February 2007 for examination by the Committee at its 31st session in 2007.

ANNEX 1

City of Vicenza and the Palladian Villas of the Veneto (Italy)

Document: WHC-04/28.COM/15B

28 COM 15B.91 The World Heritage Committee,

1. Recalling paragraph 56 of the *Operational Guidelines* (2002),
2. Requests the States Party to provide full information to the World Heritage Centre about any construction plans of the highway of Valdadastico Sud, which may impact on the integrity and the outstanding universal value of the property;
3. Notes the information provided by the State Party, in particular that the final studies on the highway of Valdadastico Sud have not been carried out;
4. Strongly urges the State Party to submit details of any building projects which may impact on the property for consideration by the Committee before commencing any construction;
5. Requests the State Party to prepare a management and conservation plan including measures foreseen to minimize the impact of any development on the integrity of the property;
6. Further requests the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies to undertake a mission to the property, in co-operation with the State Party, to assess and evaluate the potential impact on the outstanding universal value of the property;
7. Urges the State Party to submit a detailed technical report on planned or completed projects in the vicinity of the World Heritage property to the World Heritage Centre by 1 February 2005 in order that the World Heritage Committee can examine its state of conservation at its 29th session in 2005.

ANNEX II

Itinerary and programme of the mission

Mr Pasquale Bruno Malara, architect, Regional Director of Veneto, and Mr Manuel Roberto Guido, architect, responsible of UNESCO office of the Italian Ministry of Culture organized the meetings of the mission and participated to them.

23 March 2005 – afternoon

Meeting with the representatives of Veneto Region, at the offices of Society “Veneto Strade a Mestre”.

Was participated: Mr Silvano Vernizzi, Regional Dirigent, sector Urbanism, Mr Giuseppe Fasiol, engineer, Regional Dirigent sector infrastructures and transport, Mr Bellessia, engineer, of the Society “Autostrade Brescia-Padova”, and Mr Marco Ceschi, engineer, infrastructures IDROESSE.

It was presented to the mission, the project of the highway A31 Valdastico Sud, and was given a copy of documentation and maps.

24 March 2005 - Morning

1. Meeting at the City Hall of Agugliaro, with Roberto Andriolo, Vice Mayor of Agugliaro, and Mr Bellessia and Mr Ceschi, engineers. During this meeting was expressed by the Mayor the interest for the construction of the highway, from the part of the habitants of Agugliaro, as well as of the habitants of 22 villages of the region, and was presented to the mission technical details about the project.
2. Survey in the nearby area of Villa Saraceno, where the highway is planned to cross, and visit to the outside of Villa Saraceno.
3. Lunch meeting with Ms Manuela Dal Lago, President of the Veneto Province and Province Assessor for the Culture. During the lunch, the local authorities explained to the mission the motivations of the decision of the Region for the construction of the highway Valdastico Sud.

24 March 2005 - Afternoon

Meeting at Palazzo Trissino, City Hall of Vicenza, with Mr Angelo Tabaro, Director of Direction of Culture of Region of Veneto, Mr. Antonio Franziana, Head of the office of the President of Province of Vicenza, Ms Gianna Gaudini, architect, Sovrintendent for the Architectural and Landscape of province of Rovigo, Verona and Vicenza, Mr Roberto Andriolo and Mrs Bellessia and Ceschi, engineers.

In this meeting there was a further discussion about the new project and its amendments, which moved the infrastructure 900 metres away, and foresaw a trench-based layout.

After this meeting, the mission visited the exhibition “*Andrea Palladio, da Petrarca a Carlo Scarpa*”, organized by the International Center of Studies-Andrea Palladio.

ANNEX III

