

Identification

<i>Nomination</i>	Vicenza
<i>Location</i>	Veneto Region, Province of Vicenza
<i>State Party</i>	Italy
<i>Date</i>	November 1993

Justification by State Party

The incontestable value of the Palladian lesson in the history of world architecture is universally acknowledged. The diffusion of Palladianism in many countries of western Europe and the Americas is proof of this. The concentration of the works of Andrea Palladio in the city of Vicenza reveals the stamp that a single artist was able to impress upon the historical urban fabric and its surroundings, to the point that it has received global recognition.

Over and above the intrinsic value of each of Palladio's individual buildings, however, is the entire corpus of his work, which constitutes a powerful emergent nucleus in the urban fabric which elevates the value of the city as a whole, since there is a remarkable unity deriving from the relationships of the formal dialogue between the Palladian buildings and their built environment. The influence of Palladio has over the succeeding centuries constituted a fundamental point of reference for public and private architecture which has profoundly marked the urban fabric. The message of Palladio has been carried from Vicenza around the world to become a paradigm for excellence.

History and Description*History*

Vicenza is situated in the Veneto region of northern Italy on the low hills between the mountains of Berici and Lessini, on a natural communication route. The city of *Vicetia* was founded in the 2nd or 1st century BC by the Veneti and was granted Roman citizenship with the status of *municipium* in 49 BC. The ancient town plan is still recognizable in that of the modern town, Corso Palladio being the *decumanus maximus* and Contrà Porti the *cardo maximus*. Among the public buildings erected from the time of Augustus that survive are the remains of the theatre, now incorporated in a more recent structure, and sections of the aqueduct to the north of the city.

The city became the see of a Christian diocese at the end of the 4th century AD. In the 5th century it was on the route of successive barbarian groups, whose ravages were exacerbated by a series of disastrous plagues, which left the region depopulated. It formed part of the Langobardic kingdom and became chief town of one of the 36 duchies. Eventually the Pope called upon Charlemagne to drive out the Lombards, and Vicenza became a Frankish Countship within the March of Friuli. It was during this period that the first Benedictine communities of San Felice and San Pietro were established. The disintegration of the Carolingian Empire saw fresh invaders, this time the Magyars, whose depredations led to the construction of city walls.

The bloody wars between episcopal feudatories and the Ghibelline Counts that disfigured most of the 12th and early 13th centuries raged around Vicenza. The region became divided into a patchwork of small seigneuries, who fought among themselves, only uniting to defy the Holy Roman Emperor. Like most Italian cities of the period, Vicenza evolved its own administration, which in 1208 introduced controls on building within the enceinte of the walls. A new urban perimeter was created by the Della Scala family, enclosing the most important streets within the city.

A movement on the part of the small states in the region towards coalescence was interpreted by Venice as a threat and so in 1404 La Serenissima annexed the entire region. Vicenza remained part of the Venetian Republic with only one short break until its fall at the end of the 18th century. The feudal aristocracy was stripped of its powers and replaced by a dominant mercantile class. Feudal lands were expropriated and sold to patrician Venetian families, who created great agricultural estates on which they built sumptuous mansions.

The city also prospered under Venetian rule, benefiting from its situation on a major natural communication route. The town became polarized around the four main piazzas that still exist. There had been limited expansion to the east and west in the late 14th century but the city retained its basic form throughout the succeeding centuries. The wealth of its leading citizens resulted in the erection of many lavish buildings, strongly influenced by Venetian taste, but it was the advent of Andrea Palladio that gave Vicenza its enduring form.

The overall form of the city was little changed in the 19th century under first Austrian and then Italian rule, and it was not until after World War II that there was a substantial expansion of housing and industry to the west.

Description

Vicenza stands on an alluvial terrace defined by a series of watercourses. As a result there are elongated stretches of open country that penetrate deeply into the city on three sides.

The street pattern of the central area, which covers only 218 ha, has its roots in the Roman town, with modifications deriving from the medieval and Renaissance periods. It is, however, the work of Andrea Palladio (1508-80) which gives the city its unique form and appearance.

Palladio was profoundly influenced by his study of the surviving monuments of classical Rome and of the works of Vitruvius. For Vicenza he created both public (the Basilica, the Loggia del Capitaniato, the Teatro Olimpico) and private buildings.

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:

- Palazzo Barbaran da Porto(1570-77)
- Palazzo Poiana - attributed (1560-70)
- Palazzo Civena Trissino (1540)
- Palazzo Thiene di Scandiano (1542)
- Palazzo da Porto - Festa(1542)
- Logge della Basilica - the "Basilica Palladiana" (1546/1614)
- Loggia del Capitaniato, now the Loggia dell'Amministrazione Comunale (1571-2)
- Palazzo Valmarana-Braga (1566)
- Palazzo Thiene-Bonin-Longare (1562)
- Palazzo da Porto-Breganze (1570-71)
- Palazzo Chiericati, now the Museo Civico (1550)
- Teatro Olimpico (1580)
- Arco delle Scalette (1570-80)
- Palazzo da Monte-Migliorini - attributed (1550-4)
- Palazzo da Schio - attributed (1560-5)
- Casa Cogollo - attributed (1560-70)
- Church of Santa Maria Nuova - attributed (1575-80)
- Loggia Valmarana in Giardino Salvi - attributed (1570-80)
- Palazzo Garzadori-Bortolan - attributed (1560-4)
- The dome of the Cathedral (1565)
- Door on the north side of the Cathedral (1575)
- Palazzo Capra - attributed (1567)
- Valmarana Chapel, Church of Santa Corona
- Villa Trissino, now Trettenero, Cricoli (*extra muros*)

- Villa Gazzotti, now Curti, Bertesina (*extra muros*)
- Villa Capra, now Valamarana - "La Rotonda" - *extra muros* (1566-71).

The *palazzi* or town houses were fitted into the urban texture of the medieval city, creating picturesque ensembles and continuous street facades in which the Veneto Gothic style combines with Palladio's articulated classicism which are reminiscent of the streets in perspective behind the proscenium of the Teatro Olimpico. These urban compositions that are closely related to theatre design, which link reality and make-believe, are unique to Vicenza. A similar approach to composition is shown by the location of the suburban villa known as La Rotonda, as seen from the Villa Cricoli.

Management and Protection

Legal status

The Palladian buildings are variously in private, church, and municipal ownership. All are protected under the terms of Law No. 1089 of 1939, which requires the approval of the Ministry of Cultural Property and the Environment to be obtained for any works that are proposed.

A number of other buildings are also protected and are included on various lists according to their national and local importance as well as their group value. However, there is no legislation covering the unlisted buildings within the historic area beyond the planning laws, which regulate the height and volume of buildings.

Management

Supervision of the cultural heritage in Vicenza is the responsibility of the Soprintendenza Archeologica per il Veneto (Padua), the Soprintendenza per i Beni Artistici e Storici del Veneto (Venice), and the Soprintendenza per i Beni Ambientali e Architettonici (Verona). Other agencies involved with aspects of protection and conservation are the Amministrazione Regionale del Veneto (Venice), the Amministrazione Provinciale di Vicenza, the Amministrazione Comunale di Vicenza, the Curia Vescovile della Diocesi di Vicenza, and the Azienda di Promozione Turistica di Vicenza.

Organizations associated with this work include the Istituto Regionale per le Ville Venete (Venice), the Centro Internazionale di Studi d'Architettura "A. Palladio" (Vicenza), and the Vicenza Section of Europa Nostra.

The city has a general urban master plan with planning norms, as well as the 1964/1969 detailed plan for the historic centre with guidelines for protection, which was approved in 1970. The conservation master plan is currently under revision.

There are two categories of green areas related to the city. One is the land that penetrates the urban fabric from the north and south-east, as well as the open area that separates the historic town from the railway. The second category is the hills to the south of the city, the *sistema collinare*, which includes the dramatically sited Basilica di Monte Bérico and the portico ascending the hill. It is also closely related to the Villa Rotonda and its ancillary buildings on the hilltop.

These green areas constitute an acceptable buffer zone around the nominated area of the historic city and its medieval *borghi*.

Conservation and Authenticity

Conservation history

Since the late 1960s there have been conscious efforts by proprietors, supported by agencies at different administrative levels, to conserve the unique architectural heritage of Vicenza. This work is coordinated through the city's conservation master plan (the Coppa Plan).

Special attention has been paid to the historic buildings associated with Palladio. The Centro Internazionale di Studi d'Architettura "A. Palladio" has been organizing annual seminars for the past twelve years on the techniques used in the maintenance of historic buildings, in association with local Soprintendenze. As a result a high level of expertise and experience exists in Vicenza for this work.

Authenticity

Authenticity when applied to an urban area includes consideration of the form of the individual buildings that make up the townscape, the use of traditional building materials and techniques, and the functions of the buildings. In these terms Vicenza as a whole has preserved its authentic character, especially in relation to *la città di Palladio*.

The form of Palladio's buildings is documented in his *Quattro libri dell'architettura* (1570). In several cases they were not completed, but even so the majority have changed relatively little externally since they were constructed in the 16th century. Many earlier buildings in the Venetian Gothic style still exhibit much of their original form and decorative elements, even though some were "modernized" in later centuries. The influence of Palladio, which was revived in the 18th century, meant that there was a continuity in the urban character, and the palaces and churches built at this time still retain on the whole their original appearance (although in some cases there has been considerable reconstruction behind retained facades). The fabric of some buildings is deteriorating because of disuse. There are also many examples of "restoration" where the use of rendered brickwork rather than a natural material that will age satisfactorily gives the appearance of a new building.

Most of the major buildings are of either exposed or rendered brickwork, the latter simulating stone (this is especially the case in the work of Palladio and his followers). Most of the exposed brickwork is original. In the case of rendered brickwork this has sometimes been renewed to give the appearance intended by Palladio and his 18th century followers. A good example is the Palazzo Thiene, where the rusticated basement has been completely re-rendered over the brick structure in accordance with the original intentions. Hard cement is being used in some cases, which is not in accordance with traditional construction or recognized conservation treatment. A proportion of the original paving survives in the ground floors of the town houses, and the street paving, although renewed, retains the original pattern and is in the original material.

The function of many of the palaces has changed from domestic to commercial, with consequent internal changes. In the Palazzo Thiene, now the seat of the Banco Popolare Vicentina, the main rooms have mainly kept their original form and decoration, as is the case with the Palazzo Chiericati, now a museum and art gallery.

The urban fabric of the city has undergone remarkably little change, and still retains the historic townscape known from early engravings. The site of the Monastery of Santa Corona was damaged during World War II and still awaits renewal, but other war damage has been made good in a reasonably coherent manner.

Evaluation

Action by ICOMOS

A joint ICOMOS/ICCROM mission visited Vicenza in February 1994.

Qualities

Vicenza is widely, and with justification, known as *la città di Palladio*. However, he was the central figure in an urban fabric that stretches back to antiquity and forward to Neoclassicism. As such it has acquired a world status that has long been recognized and reflected in the literature of architectural and art history.

Basing his works on intimate study of classical Roman architecture, Palladio became the inspiration for a movement without parallel in architectural history. In Vicenza his work was carried on by his pupil Vincenzo Scamotti (1552-1616), through whom Palladio's ideas were transmitted to England by Inigo Jones (1573-1652). The phenomenon gained a fresh impetus in the 18th century when the revival in the Veneto

resulted in Palladianism being adopted by the great landowners of England, from whence it spread to other European countries and to North America.

Vicenza, birthplace of this movement, retains many of Palladio's original buildings and as such is a unique survival of a total Humanist concept based on a living interpretation of antiquity.

Comparative analysis

The uniqueness of Palladio's contribution to art and architecture and the concentration of so much of his original work in Vicenza gives this city a quality of uniqueness that is unchallengeable.

ICOMOS recommendations for future action

Although much of the conservation and restoration work in Vicenza is of admirable quality, some inconsistencies exist. In the light of the objectives of the World Heritage Convention and the need to improve the quality of conservation, maintenance, and restoration work, it would be an advantage to guarantee that clear guidelines be developed in Vicenza for coherent conservation management, and that a continuous monitoring system and systematic documentation be established to ensure a consistent level of appropriate technology and craftsmanship in conservation projects. These considerations contribute to the maintenance of the historical authenticity of the city, which is generated by evolution of the traditional form and character.

There are some sensitive areas related to important monuments, such as that in front of the Palazzo Chiericati. Social care is needed in such cases to ensure that any new work enhances the character of the monument and its surroundings.

Desirable as it might appear to encourage tourism as an industry with obvious economic benefits, careful consideration should be given to possible bad effects on the social life of the city and on the buildings and spaces themselves. This and other development issues should be seen in the context of Vicenza and its territory in order to obtain a balanced evolution where the significance of the historic areas and their surroundings is maintained.

Formal gardens are an integral element of the fabric of Vicenza and ICOMOS urges the competent authorities to ensure that these are treated with the same care and concern as the buildings of the city.

Recommendation

That this property be inscribed on the World Heritage List on the basis of criteria i and ii:

- **Criterion 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.
- **Criterion ii** Through its architecture, the city has exerted exceptional influence on architectural and urban design in most European countries and throughout the world.

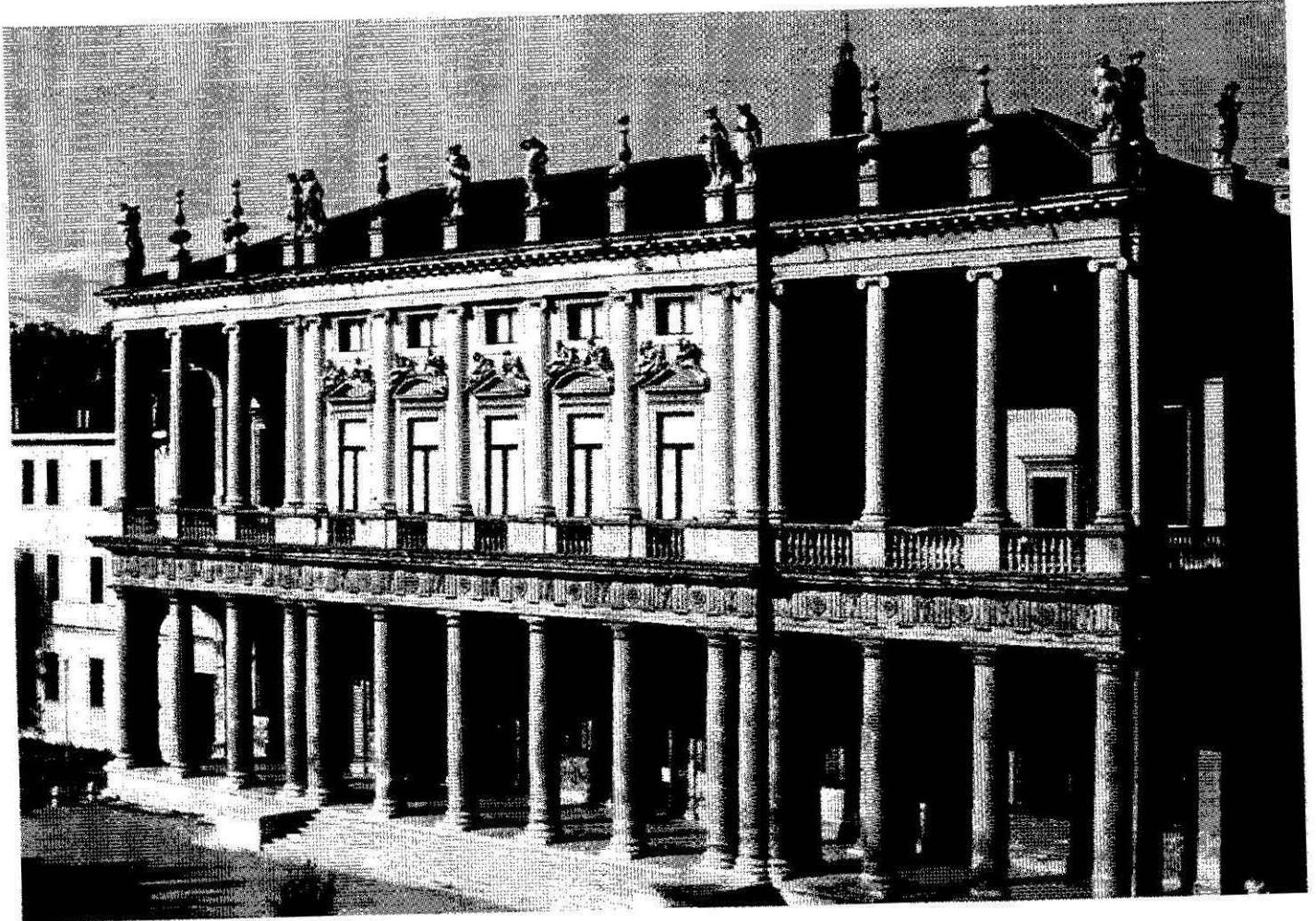
ICOMOS, October 1994



Vicence : plan de la zone protégée /
Vicenza : plan of the protected area



Vicence : palazzo Thiene et palazzo Capra
Vicehza : palazzo Thiene and palazzo Capra



Vicence / Vicenza : palazzo Chiericati