

Olomouc (Czech Republic)

No 859rev

Identification

<i>Nomination</i>	The Holy Trinity Column in Olomouc
<i>Location</i>	Haná Region, Moravia
<i>State Party</i>	Czech Republic
<i>Date</i>	24 June 1999

Justification by State Party

The Trinity Column in Olomouc ranks among the unique works in which a triumphal motif, celebrating the church and the faith, is linked with the reality of a work of art, combining architectural and town-planning solutions with elaborate sculptural decoration. In terms of design in particular, it is without question the most original work of its creator, Václav Render (1669-1733), whose amazing initiative, supported by a generous personal financial subsidy, made the erection of this monument possible. Together with numerous other local Moravian artists, he created a work which is unique in its extraordinary size and the elaborate nature and extent of its sculptural decoration, and which has no adequate counterpart in other European cities. At the same time it exemplifies local patriotism and the quality of the country's creative potential which, despite language barriers in the mixed Czech-German environment, united its forces to create a stately monument. The central ideas behind this financially very demanding construction were a strong relationship with the city, the traditional self-confidence of Czech citizens, and an emphasis on the main values acknowledged by the people of the Baroque period, placing considerable stress on religious awareness.

Criterion i

In this respect the Trinity Column is an example of the culmination not only of artistic but also, and first and foremost, of religious and civic feelings. It is an outstanding specimen of a type of monument which is traditionally to be found in a variety of simpler versions in many parts of central Europe. In this sense it constitutes evidence of a cultural and religious tradition which laid the foundations for the country's Czech-German culture and provides a platform for contemporary culture in the Czech environment.

Criterion ii

Together with other monuments (six Baroque fountains and a second Marian column) which were constructed at the same period, the Trinity Column forms part of a complex which is a significant example of the

comprehensive solution of inner city planning. Architectural and town-planning values combine with purely artistic values, determined as a whole by the intellectual trends of the time. Whilst the building of fountains with largely mythological decoration emphasizes the civic administration of the city and its municipal character, the construction of sacred monuments underlines a religious tradition and explicitly reflects the crucial humanist value of the Baroque period in central Europe. In this respect, the complex of Olomouc Baroque structures, boldly dominated by the Trinity Column, represents not only an outstanding artistic achievement but above all a monument of general cultural and historical significance, which resounds with the ideal form of the Baroque thought of the period.

Criterion iv

The existence of the Trinity Column may be perceived as a manifestation of exceptional religious faith. Because of its unique character, its monumental dimensions, and the quality of its artistic execution, it is a religious monument of world-wide importance.

Criterion vi

Category of property

In terms of the categories of cultural property set out in Article 1 of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, this is a *monument*.

History and Description

History

Following the Swedish occupation of this largely medieval city at the end of the Thirty Years' War (1648-50), four-fifths of Olomouc lay in ruins and more than 90% of its inhabitants had fled. Although it lost its status as the capital of Moravia, it remained an episcopal see and this fact, coupled with the indomitable self-confidence of its citizens, ensured its regeneration.

In the post-war reconstruction the street pattern of the medieval town was respected. However, it took on a new appearance: over the following century many impressive public and private buildings were constructed in a local variant of the prevailing style, which became known as "Olomouc Baroque." The most characteristic expression of this style was a group of monuments (columns and fountains), of which the Holy Trinity Column is the crowning glory.

"... I shall raise a column so high and splendid it shall not have an equal in any other town": these were the words used by Václav Render, Olomouc master stonemason, to describe his project for building a religious column, which was submitted to the City Council on 29 October 1715. The project was approved on 13 January 1716 and work started in the spring of 1717, Render financing and carrying out most of it himself. In 1733, the year of Render's death, the column had reached the height of a single-storey building, with a chapel inside and a central core clad in stone, together with intricate stone-masonry detailing. In this first stage, in the 1720s, the first part of the sculptural decoration was carried out by the Olomouc sculptor Filip Sattler.

In his will Render bequeathed almost all his considerable fortune to the city for the completion of the work. The

remaining sculptural work was carried out in 1745-52 by the distinguished Moravian sculptor Ondrej Zahner (1709-52). In the early 1750s, the topmost group and the group representing the Assumption of the Virgin Mary were cast in copper and gilded by the Olomouc goldsmith Šimon Forstner (1714-73). The Column was ceremonially consecrated on 9 September 1754, in the presence of the Empress Maria Theresa.

Description

In essence, the basic ground plan of the Holy Trinity Column is derived from a circle 17m in diameter. From the circular base, which has eighteen peripheral guard stones linked by a forged chain, a staircase of seven steps rises to the column's first level, the ground plan of which is hexagonal. The first level comprises a small chapel, again with a circular ground plan. At the points of the hexagon there are six conical balustrades, each topped by a pair of fire vases and two *putti* torch-bearers (c 150cm high). At the points of the hexagon, supported by six massive pedestals richly decorated on three sides with motifs such as scrolls and acanthus, are to be found the first six larger than life-size statues of saints (c 220-240cm) adjoining the body of the chapel on the first level.

The first level is richly decorated with fluted pilasters, ribbon motifs, conches, relief cartouches with relief figures of apostles, and other masonry details. The same pattern is consistently repeated in both the second and third levels. The second level retains the ground plan of the first, and is crowned by the second group of six statues of saints, placed on isolated pedestals. The third level tops the base of the column. It recedes slightly towards the centre, its periphery furnished again with six massive pedestals carrying the third row of six saints, another row of six relief figures of apostles, and rich masonry decoration. This base of the third level supports a monolithic pillar 10m high and richly decorated with fluting and acanthus motifs. The sculptural group of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary is mounted on the first third of the monolith, the figure of the Virgin Mary being supported by a pair of angels. Again, the group is executed on a larger-than-life-size scale, in gilded copper.

On the top of the pillar-monolith itself, crowned by a capital featuring scroll and acanthus motifs, there is a group of God the Father, giving a blessing, and Christ with the cross, both placed on a globe, with the figure of the Archangel Michael below. The entire structure is completed by a radial target-star with a dove in the centre, to symbolize the Holy Spirit. Once more, the entire group is on a larger-than-life-size scale in wrought and gilded copper. The overall height of the Column is 35m.

- Iconography

The highest point is occupied by the Holy Trinity Group and the group representing the Assumption of the Virgin Mary. The third level (excluding three reliefs depicting the basic theological virtues of Faith, Hope, and Love) is surrounded by six statues of saints. The first two are those related to the Virgin Mary - her parents St Anne and St Joachim. The next two are the saints closest to Jesus Christ - St Joseph the Guardian and St John the Baptist. This highest and most honourable place is also occupied by statues of two saints associated with the civic administration of the city - the Father of the Church,

St Jerome, and the martyr St Lawrence (to whom the chapel in the Olomouc City Hall was dedicated).

Six statues on the middle section represent the patrons of Slav peoples, St Constantine and St Methodius, and two martyrs, St Adalbert, the patron of the Czech Lands, and St Blasius. The last pair, St John Nepomuk and St John Sarkander, underline the traditional reverence of Olomouc, together with the whole country, for the Czech martyrs whose cult reached its climax at the time the column was built. The former was by then already canonized (1729), but St John Sarkander, canonized only recently (1995), was at that time a martyr of only local importance. The relief decoration of the middle section comprises figures of six apostles - Philip, Matthew, Simon, Jude Thaddaeus, James the Less, and Bartholomew.

The statues at the bottom level begin with two martyrs and regional patrons, St Maurice, patron of Austria, and St Wenceslas, "the heir of the Czech Lands." Both saints represent the two most significant Olomouc churches. Two Franciscan saints, St Anthony of Padua and St John Capistranus, relate to preaching activity and its tradition in the city, where the latter worked as a preacher. The university tradition is represented by St Aloysius Gonzaga, the Jesuit patron of students and young people, canonized at the time the column was built (1726). The last statue depicts St Florian, the protector against fires which, apart from plague epidemics, presented the greatest danger for towns in the Baroque period. Reliefs at the ground level feature the six remaining apostles: Peter, Paul, Andrew, James the Elder, Thomas, and John.

Zahner's sculptural decoration of the column is rather different from Render's original conception and must have been created in accordance with an ideological programme or scheme that is not likely to have been developed until the 1740s. Nonetheless, the original objective of building an honorary column remained unchanged. The array of saints here does not include traditional protectors against plague: these are fully represented on the Plague or Marian Column on the Lower Square, built at the same time, and also the work of Render. The concept of the Holy Trinity involved the two principal elements of the essential hierarchy of values in the Baroque period. Faith and religious tradition are intermingled with the idea of the city - its traditions, protection, and civil administration. The ideas of Christianity and of citizenship (allegiance to the city in the best meaning of the word) combine here as a triumphal statement in the form of a stone monument.

Management and Protection

Legal status

The Holy Trinity Column was proclaimed a National Cultural Monument by Statute No 262 of the Government of the Czech Republic on 24 May 1995. The protection and preservation of cultural monuments is defined in Law No 20/87 on State Conservation of Historical Monuments, implemented by Edict No 66 of the Ministry of Culture dated 26 April 1988. This is strong legislation, with severe penalties for breaches of its provisions. Any intervention that may impact the state of monuments or their surroundings require authorization by the competent authorities at national and local level.

The historic core of the city of Olomouc was designated a protected historic area on 21 December 1987. This imposes strict controls over all forms of work within the designated area. It also constitutes an effective buffer zone for the Holy Trinity Column.

Management

The monument is owned and managed by Olomouc City Council. The Council is responsible under the provisions of the 1987 Act cited above, and also the Local Authority Areas Act 367/1990, for managing and financing protection and maintenance of the monument and the area surrounding it. These statutes also require the Department of Culture of the Olomouc District Council to supervise the protection and maintenance of the monument; it is the planning authority responsible for decision-making within the protected historic area. Finally, the Department for the Care of Historical Monuments of the Ministry of Culture has a decision-making role in relation to the National Cultural Monument.

The Olomouc Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Heritage provides technical documentation relating to protection and conservation to the municipal and district authorities, to assist them in discharging their statutory duties. At national level the Prague-based State Institute for the Conservation of Cultural Heritage provides professional backup on behalf of the Ministry of Culture.

There is an Master Plan for the City of Olomouc and also a Regulatory Master Plan for the Olomouc Conservation Area, the latter approved in 1999. These include special provisions designed to conserve and enhance the historic townscape; emphasis is laid on the importance of maintaining the existing open spaces around cultural monuments.

Conservation and Authenticity

Conservation history

The Holy Trinity Column was extensively repaired in 1820, and again in 1874-88, though to a lesser extent. Major restoration projects, involving the regilding of metal components, surface cleaning of the stone, and conservation work on the sculptural components, took place in 1946-48 and in 1973-75. A photogrammetric survey was carried out in 1996 and 1998, and there has also been a comprehensive examination and assessment of the current state of the Column, providing data on environmental conditions, biological and chemical sources of degradation, as well as archival material relating to the construction and subsequent restoration and conservation of the structure. From this a long-term programme of conservation and restoration has been prepared: comprehensive conservation work is being carried out in the period 1999-2001, followed by regular inspection of the state of conservation of the sculptural elements.

Authenticity

The authenticity of the monument is very high. It is a very important feature of the city, held in high esteem by the citizens. It has been subject to periodical restoration and conservation work over more than two centuries, but this has been confined for the most part to the removal of surface contamination. One statue that was seriously

damaged during World War II was replaced by an exact replica.

Evaluation

Action by ICOMOS

An ICOMOS expert mission visited Olomouc in February 1998. An opinion was also obtained from the ICOMOS International Committee on Historic Towns and Villages.

Qualities

The Holy Trinity Column in Olomouc is an outstanding example of the Moravian Baroque style that developed in the 18th century. It has a high symbolic value as representing the civic pride and religious devotion of the inhabitants of this city. It is, moreover, an exceptional example of this type of commemorative column, characteristic of central Europe in the Baroque period.

Comparative analysis

The erection of Marian (plague) columns on town squares is an exclusively Baroque, post-Tridentine, phenomenon. Its iconographic basis lies in the Book of Revelation. The basic model is thought to have been the column in the Piazza Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome, from 1614.

The first Transalpine column was erected in Munich (1638) serving as the model for columns in Prague (1650, now destroyed) and Vienna (1667). Towards the end of the 17th century and in the first half of the 18th century, the building of such columns was at its peak, particularly in the Habsburg lands of central Europe.

In the same period, another wave of building began, this time of Trinity columns. The Marian columns were erected in thanksgiving for the end of the frequent plague epidemics at that time (*Pestsäule*). Trinity columns, on the other hands, were commemorative structures (*Ehrensäule*), erected to symbolize the power and the glory of the Roman Catholic Church. Most of them derive from the two basic types located in Vienna: the Marian column Am Hof (1667) and the Trinity Column Am Graben (1692). Of the many columns erected in the first half of the 18th century few exceeded 15m in height. It should be noted that a traditional Marian column was also built in Olomouc (1716-24) on the Lower Square (*Dolní náměstí*).

The Olomouc Holy Trinity Column is without equal in any other town, by virtue of its monumental dimensions, the extraordinary richness of its sculptural decoration, and the overall artistic execution. It may justly be described as representing the culmination of this tradition. Apart from its decoration and size, the incorporation of a chapel in the body of the column is also exceptional.

ICOMOS comments

The original nomination in 1997 by the State Party consisted of the Holy Trinity Column, together with the Marian Column and six Baroque fountains, presented as a group. ICOMOS found difficulty in supporting this nomination for inscription on the World Heritage List, since it did not feel that the group as such possessed "outstanding universal value," as specified in the Convention. It accordingly recommended rejection. However, at the 22nd Session of the Bureau of the World

Heritage Committee in Paris in June 1998, it was agreed after discussions between the President, the State Party, and ICOMOS that the nomination should be revised and resubmitted.

The present nomination of the Holy Trinity Column alone is, somewhat paradoxically perhaps, consistent with the requirement of “outstanding universal value,” for the reasons set out under “Qualities” above.

Brief description

This memorial column, erected in the early years of the 18th century, is the most outstanding example of a type of monument that is very typical of central Europe. In the characteristic regional style known as Olomouc Baroque and rising to a height of 35m, it is decorated with many fine religious sculptures, the work of the distinguished Moravian artist Ondrej Zahner.

Recommendation

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

Criterion i The Olomouc Holy Trinity Column is one of the most exceptional examples of the apogee of central European Baroque artistic expression.

Criterion iv The Holy Trinity Column constituted a unique material demonstration of religious faith in central Europe during the Baroque period, and the Olomouc example represents its most outstanding expression.

ICOMOS, September 2000