

ITALY

18th-Century Royal Palace at Caserta, with the Park, the Aqueduct of Vanvitelli, and the San Leucio Complex

Brief description

The monumental complex at Caserta, created by the Bourbon king Charles III in the mid-18th century to rival Versailles and the Royal Palace in Madrid, is exceptional for the way in which it brings together a magnificent palace with its park and gardens, as well as natural woodland, hunting lodges and a silk factory. It is an eloquent expression of the Enlightenment in material form, integrated into, rather than imposed on, its natural setting.

1. Introduction

Year(s) of Inscription 1997

Agency responsible for site management

- Soprintendenza for monuments and historical, artistical and ethnoanthropological heritage of the provinces of Benevento a Caserta
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2. Statement of Significance

Inscription Criteria C (i), (ii), (iii), (iv)

Justification provided by the State Party

The eighteenth century estate in Caserta represents a unique creation of the eighteenth century spirit which was able to build buildings of great architectural value which set well in a natural landscape according to urbanistic schemes, which influenced the further development of the territorial characteristics of Campania and of the late baroque and neoclassical architecture of the sites.

The Royal Palace outstanding creation of Luigi Vanvitelli has anticipated the exterior shapes of the eighteenth century buildings and it is, at the same time, the swan song of the spectacular baroque art

from which it takes advantage of all the expedients to create illusionist, polydirectional spaces.

The Gardens in Caserta are the results of a revisitation of the great French parterres full of a series of fountains and fish pools, mindful of the great Renaissance tradition of Caprarola and Bagnaia.

The English style garden is the work of art of the British Gardner G.A. Graefer assisted by Carlo Vanvitelli who was able to transpose in the Italian south one of the creation in vogue in the European courts of the end of the eighteenth century.

The Carolina aqueduct was built to provide the fountains and the pools with water.

It is a hydraulic project of high level engineering and architectonic water works, providing even the silk factories in San Leucio with water. The significant cultural value of the estate of Caserta is in the capacity to transform the enlightening knowledge of the Neapolitan eighteenth century culture into an architectonic and landscape creation whose utilitarian representative aims harmonized in an urbanistic design able to leave an indelible mark on the territory of the hills of Campania.

As provided in ICOMOS evaluation

(1989): If the merits of Caserta are to be compared with those of other royal palaces inspired by Versailles, for example, Drottningholm, La Granja, Potsdam or even Herrenchiemsee, it would be intolerable that the poor management of the historic heritage and its environment should constitute an element of negative discrimination. [...]

Recommendation: That inclusion of this cultural property on the World Heritage List be deferred owing to the lack of guarantees of proper management of the whole domain.

(1996): Qualities and comparative analysis: The Caserta complex was deliberately created as a rival to Versailles and Madrid, with which it must inevitably be compared. Its special quality lies in the way in which it was adapted to the surrounding landscape and incorporated individual pre-existing elements into an integrated whole, rather than seeking to modify or ignore it, as is the case with comparable royal and aristocratic estates. The idealistic industrial development of the Belvedere Estate is also unique among such monumental complexes. (...)

ICOMOS recommended strongly that the extent of the area proposed for inscription on the World Heritage should be reduced. It was inappropriate to

include the entire 343ha of the San Leucio area or the 525ha of the Tifatini Hills, since these have almost completely lost their historic cultural qualities. Detailed proposals were discussed by the ICOMOS expert mission and the Soprintendenza. Subsequently, supplementary documentation was received from the State Party. This showed a more restricted area forming the nomination, as proposed by ICOMOS. A commission was being set up by the Soprintendenza to coordinate all work within the Palace ensemble. The Soprintendenza also undertook to restore the Bosco di San Silvestro as an example of 18th century landscape art, in collaboration with the Comitato Nazionale per i Giardini Storici.

Recommendation: That this property be inscribed on the World Heritage List on the basis of *criteria (i), (ii), (iii), and (iv)*:

The monumental complex at Caserta, whilst cast in the same mould as other 18th century royal establishments, is exceptional for the broad sweep of its design, incorporating not only an imposing palace and park, but also much of the surrounding natural landscape and an ambitious new town laid out according to the urban planning precepts of its time. The industrial complex of the Belvedere, designed to produce silk, is also of outstanding interest because of the idealistic principles that underlay its original conception and management.

Committee Decision

Bureau (1990): The Bureau recommended that the examination of this nomination be deferred, and invited the Italian authorities to submit a fully revised nomination that would answer ICOMOS queries regarding the boundaries and protection measures.

Bureau (June 1997): The Bureau recommended that the Committee inscribe this property on the basis of criteria (i), (ii), (iii) and (iv). The monumental complex at Caserta, whilst cast in the same mould as other 18th century royal establishments, is exceptional for the broad sweep of its design, incorporating not only an imposing palace and park, but also much of the surrounding natural landscape and an ambitious new town laid out according to the urban planning precepts of its time. The industrial complex of the Belvedere, designed to produce silk, is also of outstanding interest because of the idealistic principles that underlay its original conception and management.

Session (1997): The Committee decided to inscribe this property on the basis of criteria (i), (ii), (iii) and (iv), considering that the monumental complex at

Caserta, whilst cast in the same mould as other 18th century royal establishments, is exceptional for the broad sweep of its design, incorporating not only an imposing palace and park, but also much of the surrounding natural landscape and an ambitious new town laid out according to the urban planning precepts of its time. The industrial complex of the Belvedere, designed to produce silk, is also of outstanding interest because of the idealistic principles that underlay its original conception and management.

- Statement of significance adequately defines the outstanding universal value of the site
- No change required

Boundaries and Buffer Zone

- Status of boundaries of the site: adequate
- Buffer zone: adequate
- The buffer zone is an area protected by Landscape's protection law; includes territories next to the borders of Palace and Park, The Colonia of San Leucio, the Tifanini hills and the Sommaco e Marmorella mount. This is a quite huge area, but protection is guarantee by the respect of Landscape's plan. The Buffer zone is not sufficient to protect Acquedotto Carolino because a few boundary territories are not included and then protected by law
- It's required to define protection's terms on boundary areas of Acquedotto Carolino, according to law. (Legislative Decree 22 January 2004, no 42, Cultural Heritage and Landscape Code)

Status of Authenticity/Integrity

- World Heritage site values have been maintained
- Deterioration of Bosco of San Silvestro can take to the complete loss of original vegetation and particularities, and might lead to new landslides (environmental degradation)

3. Protection

Legislative and Administrative Arrangements

- Landscape's plans, approved by State on all territories included in the buffer zone, excepting Acquedotto Carolino. These rules must accept by urban plan in order to be more efficient. The protection of Aquedotto Carolino is entrusted by the Mount Taburno's landscape's plan, and by the Caserta's one
- No change happened in property, legal and contractual position. In year 2000 the Landscape's plan including San Leucio and its

park was approved. Before it was approved the Mount Taburno's landscape's plan including part of the Aquedotto Carolino

- The protection arrangements are considered sufficiently effective

Actions taken/proposed:

- Updating of urban plans according to Landscape's plan; all rules taken by Landscape's plans must be accepted by urban plans
- Protection of the Aquedotto Carolino; The boundaries of the Aquedotto Carolino must be protected by law according to Legislative Decree 22 January 2004, no 42 Cultural Heritage and Landscape Code

4. Management

Use of site/property

- Visitor attraction; urban centre; museum; Cultural Landscape

Management /Administrative Body

- Steering group formally constituted, to write the Management Plan for the site included in the World Heritage List
- Management by the State Party, under protective legislation; today each part of the complex is managed by the public agencies owners of the parts, according to protection laws and provisions given by Soprintendenza (local structures of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and activities)
- Plans to appoint a Site manager
- Levels of public authority who are primarily involved with the management of the site: national; regional; local
- The current management system is sufficiently effective

Actions proposed:

- Writing Management Plan; The Management Plan has to be written reaching an agreement with all agencies, citizens' associations and business' representatives. All initiatives ought to represent a major protection for cultural heritage and should take citizens active part of the safeguard. Increasing value of cultural heritage should be always bound to increase respect of rules in citizens and to increase interest in local tourist systems and products

5. Management Plan

- Management plan under preparation; to be completed and adopted: 06.2006
- Responsibility for over-seeing the implementation of the management plan and monitoring its effectiveness: Soprintendenza for cultural heritage and activities of Caserta as determined in the understanding protocol firm by State and local agencies

6. Financial Resources

Financial situation

- State Budget; Local funds; Community; funds; attributive funds given to Regional authority
- European Union funds
- Insufficient; Trying to integrate State funds and Community attributive funds and sponsors

7. Staffing Levels

- Number of staff: 300
- No adequate staff resources; Despite high quality personal available for cultural heritage preservation, human resources are not enough, given Site's extension and Management problems. There is lack of staff expert in those subjects. There are no agronomist, geologist, fitopatologist, botanist for gardens and landscape care

Rate of access to adequate professional staff across the following disciplines:

- Very good: conservation, management, promotion; interpretation; education; visitor management
- Support of regular volunteers: Oasis in San Silvestro's wood is supported by WWF volunteers for guided visits and maintenance

8. Sources of Expertise and Training in Conservation and Management Techniques

- Inside the Palace there are painting and paper restoration's laboratories; There are school and laboratories of restoration on the premises of University and private school
- Training needs: It is necessary to have qualified gardeners, therefore restorations and maintenance's School for historical gardens; Also need of silk's fabric, traditional arts and craft restorer as well as bricklayers and craftsmen capable of build with traditional techniques

9. Visitor Management

- Visitor statistics: 657.890 (data by ticket office; for San Leucio data provided by schools' reservations), 2004
- Visitor facilities: The Palace is equipped with ticket office, checkroom, snack bar, bookshop, didactic sections, transports, bike hire; Belvedere of San Leucio is equipped with ticket and information office, coffee house, guide visit; A museum of "opera and territorio" which illustrates the history of the palace, the park and the English garden including an exhibition of antique gardening equipment. There are explaining panels about internal spaces, gardens and fountains

10. Scientific Studies

- Risk assessment, studies related to the value of the site, monitoring exercises, condition surveys, archaeological surveys, transportation studies, estimation of fire risks
- Monitoring of fire risks and damaging; computer catalogues of the species of English garden and park, and of deterioration's phenomena. Studies on historic realization of green monuments, on criteria of restoration and on the value of single botanic exemplary. Constant activity of monitoring and control of degradation's phenomena due to new buildings and loss of historical-artistic values. Studies and international congress about plants diseases, conservation and restoration strategy for historical gardens, and about problems connected to public use. The studies are necessary to conservation and restoration of the site; thanks to them it is possible to respect historical phases and traces and to preserve the complexity of the hole monument
- The World heritage designation of the site inspired a debate on the importance of conservation and restoration of the gardens and led to a management plan and to a constant maintenance of the whole structure. Thanks to that, ruined and neglected parts were restored and brought back to their original magnificence. Increase of value and promotion of the site were encouraged

11. Education, Information and Awareness Building

- An adequate number of signs referring to World Heritage site
- World Heritage Convention Emblem used on some publications

- Adequate awareness of World Heritage among: visitors, local authorities
- Need for awareness raising: More information on mass-media, on public and private school, on cultural associations; promotion initiatives in the municipality headquarters: conferences, vocational training, film showings, lectures
- There are annual programs and initiatives organized by the Soprintendenza in local schools concerning knowledge and protection of cultural heritage and landscape both of the site and of close territories
- Conventions and conferences about the relationship between the Palace, other European palaces and other World Heritage sites took place and are in planning. A convention about the correct use of historical gardens, in association with Versailles and Schonbrunn is designed. Publication of books and brochures about European palaces. In September, 2000 an international convention about Restoration and maintenance of historical gardens was realized
- The designation of the World Heritage is constantly used in order to define and to emphasize the importance of the site, in order to promote initiatives of territorial marketing and organization of local tourist systems
- Web site available
- Local participation: free entrance to the park and English garden for Caserta's citizens

12. Factors affecting the Property (State of Conservation)

Reactive monitoring reports

- N/A

Conservation interventions

- Damages caused by fire on cover structure were repainted during 1997; maintenance and restoration of paintings and architecture are constantly taking place. Restoration of the park and the English garden is quite completed. The restoration of San Silvestro's wood will start soon, the restoration of fountains, of Belvedere complex, and the irrigation system of the meadows were completed. The reorganization of San Leucio routes and the improvement of the ancient vineyard are occurring now
- Present state of conservation: Good

Threats and Risks to site

- Development pressure; environmental pressure; visitor/tourism pressure

- Emergency measures taken: Pollution control; air, water and soil pollution are constantly under control. When values are too high it applies amendments, temporary closing or other process able to reduce pollution phenomena

13. Monitoring

- No formal monitoring programme
- Measures taken/planned: the management plan provide for a constant observation in order to develop indicators able to measure conservation degree of the site and sustainability of visitors

14. Conclusions and Recommended Actions

- Main benefits of WH status: conservation; social; economic; management; as World heritage site, receive more funds from the Regional Authority and has a great appreciation by people
- Strength/Weaknesses of management: deterioration of the environment, both naturalistic and social-economic

Future actions:

- Improvement of services; use community attributive to improve deteriorated areas, and to get better services to visitors and schools. Organisation responsible: Municipality of Caserta and Aquedotto Carolino's villages and cities. Timeframe: 2005-2010