

# SPAIN

## La Lonja de la Seda de Valencia

### Brief description

Built between 1482 and 1533, this group of buildings was originally used for trading in silk (hence its name, the Silk Exchange) and it has always been a centre for commerce. It is a masterpiece of late Gothic architecture. The grandiose Sala de Contratación (Contract or Trading Hall), in particular, illustrates the power and wealth of a major Mediterranean mercantile city in the 15th and 16th centuries.

### 1. Introduction

**Year(s) of Inscription** 1996

#### Agency responsible for site management

- Artistic and Cultural Heritage Service of the City of Valencia
- Directorate General of Valencian Cultural Heritage of the Valencian Regional Government.

### 2. Statement of Significance

**Inscription Criteria** C (i), (iv)

#### Justification provided by the State Party

La Mairie de Valence considère que la Lonja doit être insérée dans le Patrimoine Mondial de l'Unesco comme Bien Culturel par sa singularité et sa beauté, ainsi que pour toutes et chacune des raisons qui justifient l'inscription Esthétique unique dans son genre, édifice considéré supérieur à la Bourse de Palma de Mallorca et de Barcelone, son beau style gothique avec des couronnements de la Renaissance, résultat de l'art quattrocentiste méditerranéen.

La salle de commerce, joliment soutenue par des colonnes hélicoïdales à grand effet de légèreté et hauteur, unie à l'édifice du Consulat, siège de l'historique tribunal au magnifique plafond à caissons de la "Cambra Dourada" de la disparue Maison de la ville.

La Lonja est une représentation caractéristique du passé commercial et financier de la ville de Valence du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle qui durant 500 ans a conservé sa

fonction initiale: Maison de commerce, jadis de l'huile et de la soie et actuellement de grains et de céréales. Siège de la traditionnelle Académie Royale de la Culture Valencienne. L'honnêteté de ses commerçants et la justice de ses Syndics sont monumentalisées sur l'inscription qui parcourt le périmètre du Salon de commerce. Première institution commerçante - créée en 1408 en guise de Banque et de Bourse dont les opérations s'effectuaient sur la "Taula de Canvis". La beauté de l'édifice captiva tous les voyageurs étrangers qui écrivent sur Valence, tout cela uni à la caractéristique culturelle qui reflète l'époque dorée du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle justifie largement l'inclusion de la Lonja dans le catalogue du Patrimoine Mondial de l'Unesco et à plus forte raison durant 5 siècles on a respecté le but pour lequel elle fut créée: le commerce, symbole d'une ville méditerranéenne consacrée à l'agriculture et à l'exportation depuis le XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle jusqu'à nos jours.

Pour toutes ces raisons comprises dans les documents qui accompagnent ce formulaire, la Lonja est protégée par l'Etat et par l'Administration autonome comme Monument Historique-Artistique.

#### As provided in ICOMOS evaluation

*Qualities* The ensemble of La Lonja de la Seda de Valencia is a remarkably well preserved example of a commercial building in Late Gothic monumental style of exceptionally high artistic quality that has remained in use for the same purpose for five centuries. It is an outstanding symbol of the role played by merchants from the Iberian Peninsula in the Mediterranean and beyond in the 15th and 16th centuries.

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

La Lonja de la Seda de Valencia is a wholly exceptional example of a secular building in Late Gothic style, which dramatically illustrates the power and wealth of one of the great Mediterranean mercantile cities.

#### Committee Decision

Bureau (June 1996): The Bureau recommended the Committee to inscribe the nominated property on the basis of criteria (i) and (iv) considering that the site is of outstanding universal value as it is a wholly exceptional example of a secular building in late Gothic style, which dramatically illustrates the power and wealth of one of the great Mediterranean mercantile cities.

Session (1996): The Committee decided to inscribe the nominated property on the basis of cultural criteria (i) and (iv), considering that the site is of outstanding universal value as it is a wholly exceptional example of a secular building in late Gothic style, which dramatically illustrates the power and wealth of one of the great Mediterranean mercantile cities.

- 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

#### **Status of Authenticity/Integrity**

- World Heritage site values have been maintained

### **3. Protection**

#### **Legislative and Administrative Arrangements**

- Spanish Historical Heritage Law; Valencian Historical Heritage Law
- General Zoning Plan of the City of Valencia; Special Plan for Protection and Interior Renovation of the Market Quarter
- The protection arrangements are considered highly effective

### **4. Management**

#### **Use of site/property**

- A monument open to the public with cultural events

#### **Management /Administrative Body**

- Municipal management; The City of Valencia is owner
- Levels of public authority who are primarily involved with the management of the site: local
- The current management system is not sufficiently effective
- Actions proposed: The City of Valencia, has subscribed an agreement with the Polytechnic University of Valencia, through the UNESCO Forum – University and Heritage, for drawing up a Directive Plan for Safeguarding the Valencia Silk Exchange and its Immediate Proximity
- An Integral Intervention Project for Maintenance and Conservation has also been drawn up

- A project is being designed for consolidating the areas to be open to visitors, which at present are inaccessible to the public

### **5. Management Plan**

- Management plan is being implemented
- Implementation commenced: 2004
- Title : Directive Plan for Safeguarding the Valencia Silk Exchange and its Immediate Proximity
- Adequate
- Responsibility for over-seeing the implementation of the management plan and monitoring its effectiveness: In spite of the project drawing up a Directive Plan for Safeguarding the Valencia Silk Exchange and its Immediate Proximity, the creation of a Centre for Documentation and Interpretation and a specific Commission

### **6. Financial Resources**

#### **Financial situation**

- Municipal investment by the City of Valencia
- Funding is considered insufficient

### **7. Staffing Levels**

- Number of staff: 5

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

- Good: conservation
- Average: management, promotion, interpretation, education, visitor management

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

- Not provided

### **9. Visitor Management**

- Visitor statistics: 590,889 (2002). The monument has been closed since, due to restoration
- Visitor needs: ramps and alternative accesses

### **10. Scientific Studies**

- Scientific studies include doctoral thesis, two research projects by groups from the Polytechnic University of Valencia, and R+D

project, an I+R+D project, three exhibitions for educating the public and Primary and Secondary schoolchildren, several panel discussions, technical conferences, and the production of two promotional videos

### 11. Education, Information and Awareness Building

- An adequate number of signs referring to World Heritage site
- World Heritage Convention Emblem used on publications
- Adequate awareness of World Heritage among: visitors, local communities, businesses, local authorities
- Need for educational promotions
- Web site available

### 12. Factors affecting the Property (State of Conservation)

#### Reactive monitoring reports

- N/A

#### Conservation interventions

- The 'Study and diagnosis of the benches and cleaning and maintenance project for the interior and exterior façades of the Valencia Merchants' Exchange' project aims to detain the stone's deterioration, as well as eradicating the termites in the building
- Present state of conservation: Very good

#### Threats and Risks to site

- Development, natural disasters, number of inhabitants
- Specific issues: Regarding the report 'Study and diagnosis of the benches and cleaning and maintenance project for the interior and exterior façades of the Valencia Merchants' Exchange'; air pollution
- Emergency measures taken; traffic control and pedestrian areas; revitalising the district and housing rehabilitation; cleaning and maintenance work on the façades began in January 2004, and is expected to continue for three years

### 13. Monitoring

- Formal monitoring programme: The following collaborators participate in its supervision: Historical-Artistic Heritage Service of the City of Valencia; Directorate General of Valencian

Cultural Heritage of the Valencian Regional Government; Polytechnic University of Valencia; Forum UNESCO – University and Heritage

### 14. Conclusions and Recommended Actions

- Main benefits of WH status: conservation, social, economic
- Weaknesses of management: The loss of inhabitants in the district and loss in social quality. There is not sufficient information given the large number of visitors. There is too much traffic in the area, which is the cause of air pollution

#### Future actions:

- The City of Valencia has carried out several municipal plans for the rehabilitation of housing blocks (and offers different forms of economic aid to young people with the aim of bringing the district back to life
- The city is studying a plan to make the area a pedestrian zone
- Recently, work began to clean and renovate the interior and exterior façades of the Silk Exchange, which is being carried out in several phases