

ITALY

City of Vicenza and the Palladian Villas of the Veneto

Brief description

Founded in the 2nd century B.C. in northern Italy, Vicenza prospered under Venetian rule from the early 15th to the end of the 18th century. The work of Andrea Palladio (1508–80), based on a detailed study of classical Roman architecture, gives the city its unique appearance. Palladio's urban buildings, as well as his villas, scattered throughout the Veneto region, had a decisive influence on the development of architecture. His work inspired a distinct architectural style known as Palladian, which spread to England and other European countries, and also to North America.

1. Introduction

Year(s) of Inscription 1994, 1996

Agency responsible for site management

- Municipality of Vicenza
Department Territorial Development
Corso Palladio 98/A
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2. Statement of Significance

Inscription Criteria C (i), (ii)

Justification provided by the State Party

(1994): The indispensable value of the Palladian lesson in the history of world architecture is a universally recognized datum.

The diffusion of Palladianism in many Western European countries, the United Kingdom and the continent of America is proof of this and the studies surrounding that movement, which is without precedent of so great an extension have been, determined everywhere.

The specification of the works of A. Palladio, amassed inside the city of Vicenza, in the twenty-five a fore listed architectural episodes, also only partially accomplished, contains the exceptionally of the great hallmark that a single artist has

succeeded in transmitting to the historical urban aggregate and its surroundings, expressing it so deeply to the point that the connotation has become a global artistic fact.

In addition to the intrinsic worth of each individual work by A. Palladio, as per the list already cited, the whole of his works constitute a strong emergent nucleus in the urban fabric such as to represent in turn a further additional extraordinary value of the city, since a singular uniqueness is derived also by virtue of the relationships of formal dialogue between the Palladian monuments and their surroundings constructed for it.

Since the unrepeatable extraordinary aspect of the Palladian Work in Vicenza draws its meaning of exceptionality fundamentally from that emergent unitary intonation which the city itself has derived as is heartily recognized by anyone has the opportunity to visit it.

The more so that, Palladian influence determined in the city for later centuries an unrelinquishable reference for public and private architecture which has had marked consequence for the urban fabric.

Without counting the imitations of those models which have been diffused in countries other than Italy who have guarded the Palladian message as a model of canons with absolute value to be followed and perpetuated and which international culture has learned to recognize.

Mention has already been made, in the specific schedules, of the maintenance aspects and the state of repair of the various monuments also in relation to the ownership thereof.

It now behoves us recall the aspect of the general state of preservation of the Palladian works in the city: it is presented with the characteristics of a highly committed, conscious, cultural operation which has called many specialist to complete in recent years to unite several disciplines (historians of architecture, experts in investigations, experts in restoration methods and techniques, and craftsmen and skilled workers) That interdisciplinary approach has produced an operational method of great interest and efficacious accomplished works which have become exemplary both for the method followed and for the results obtained by recognized scientific worth in an international framework.

The presence of the "Andrea Palladio" International Centre for Architectural Studies in Vicenza, which unites in its own scientific council the most established people of learning in the world, has recognized all the original and authentic episodes especially through design, the use of materials and

the correct execution of the work which has come down to us.

The integration and modifications of the “fabrics” which in any case have not impaired their original consistency and the creative strength of the initial concept have also been carefully considered although not fully realized with respect to the design and also in the examination of the modifications, adjuncts and different integration which have been effected in subsequent periods.

The celebrity of Palladio's work has determined, in the awareness of its noble message, the constitution of many Institutes for protection which flank the official protective action of the competent authorities efficaciously.

(1996): The unequalled value of Palladio's lesson in the history of world architecture is universally recognized. The incontrovertible proof is that the so-called Palladianism spread to many quarters of Western Europe, of the United Kingdom and of the American Continent and that this movement of unprecedented proportions was studied everywhere. Palladio's works in the Venetian territory, and particularly the 25 architectural complexes described above, even if not all brought to completion, bear the extraordinary imprint that one single artist was able to leave on a territory. Palladio's works have marked this area so deeply that this connotation has become an artistic and cultural hallmark that cannot be ignored. As a matter of fact, next to the intrinsic value of each single work listed above, the whole of these works is an extremely important element in the regional territory in general and particularly in the area of Vicenza, which in turn gives added and extraordinary value to this province. This because the formal relationship established between Palladio's monuments (Villas) and the Venetian landscape has produced a uniqueness which gives it universal value.

Moreover, the artistic relationship between the town palaces and the country villas, as established by Palladio, has added to the beauty of this area, which can be fully appreciated in the vicinity of Vicenza.

Palladio's unique and prodigious activity in this territory was extraordinary above all because it turned the Venetian region into a whole, as is recognized by all those who visit it. All the more so, if we consider that in the following centuries Palladio's influence was such that he came to be the fundamental reference point for the public and private rural architecture of some consequence in the territorial structure. Not to mention that his

models were imitated in foreign countries, where Palladio's message was regarded as a paradigm of canons of absolute value, to be followed and perpetuated, as the world of culture has well recognized. As a matter of fact, in the XVII, XVIII and XIX century Palladio became very famous both in Italy and abroad, particularly in Europe and in the United States of America. His success started while he was still alive, in his very homeland. Therefore, starting from the second half of the XVI century we can talk of Palladianism, and inevitably so, since Palladio had been taken as a model by artists less gifted than him but who shared with him the culture he had been able to impose.

Important cultural and economic factors were at the origin of the diffusion of Palladio's florid style to England, Ireland, Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Russia, Switzerland, Belgium, France, the Netherlands, Scandinavia and the United States of America.

Those architects who had studied Palladio's treatise and who had approached the effectual reality of his works, regarded him as the artist who had been able to recreate the classical forms adapting them to the changed social and economic conditions. For those architects Palladio was the most intelligent and “honest” (true) interpreter of a classicism which did not take its inspiration only from the Rome of the Caesars, but also from the Hellenic and Hellenistic culture.

For the advocates of the neoclassical “revival”, Palladio became a charismatic leader: to the late descendants of the Age of the Enlightenment Palladio was what Vitruvius had been to the architects of the fifteenth and sixteenth century. Therefore Palladio's personality made a fundamental contribution to a spread of culture which is perhaps unequalled in the history of architecture, if we consider the almost worldwide influence of his production.

This is demonstrated by a continuously renewed critical interest, which has been given new impetus in recent years, as is brilliantly testified by the “International Centre for Architectural Studies” named after him. This Centre periodically gathers teachers and students from various countries, also outside Europe, who take part in its internationally renowned courses.

In this context, the heritage formed by the Venetian Villas and by Palladio's Villas in particular stands out as a unique phenomenon which dominates the Italian world of art, in which Palladio's work came to be regarded as extraordinary because, thanks to his own artistic personality, he was able to

establish, in the historical context of his own age, a cultural climate which led to the diffusion of classicism to the whole of Italy and Europe.

When talking of Palladio, one must not forget the other artistic productions that went side by side with the prevailing architectural production and which reached very high standards particularly in Vicenza: pictorial decorations, sculptures, designs for gardens and parks which sometimes made a fundamental contribution to the achievement of the final result. It is now appropriate to describe the general state of as conservation of Palladio's works in the Venetian territory. In this regard, an extremely important cultural operation is being carried out, which in the past few years has gathered a number of experts from various fields (architecture historians, experts in the field of building survey and restoration methods, skilled workers).

As provided in ICOMOS evaluation

(1994): 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.

(1996): The outstanding universal value of the work of Andrea Palladio has already been recognized by the inscription of the historic centre of Vicenza and three Palladian villas in its immediate vicinity in 1994. The proposed extension extends that recognition to the other manifestations of his creative genius in the Veneto region, covering his versatility in applying his principles to rural as well as urban contexts.

Recommendation

That this proposal for extension of World Heritage monument No 712 be approved and inscribed on the basis of the existing Criteria (i) and (ii), the title of the inscribed property being changed to "The City of Vicenza and the Palladian villas of the Veneto."

Committee Decision

Bureau (July 1994): The Bureau recommended the inscription of this property on the World Heritage List and that the ICCROM/ICOMOS mission

evaluation report be transmitted to the State Party. Moreover, it was suggested to change the name of the property by adding the words "The City of Palladio".

Session (1994): The Committee requested the very detailed ICOMOS/ICCROM evaluation report to be submitted to the Italian authorities. With the consent of the Delegate of Italy, the Committee decided to inscribe this city under the following name: "Vicenza, City of Palladio"

Bureau (June 1996): The Bureau recommended the Committee to inscribe the nominated property on the basis of criteria (i) and (ii). With the proposed extension the Bureau further recommended that the name be changed to "The City of Vicenza and the Palladian Villas of the Veneto." The Secretariat informed the Bureau that it had received a letter in May 1996 from the Italian Delegation concerning the withdrawal of the Villa Thiene in Cicogna di Villafranca Padovana from the proposed extension. Session (1996): The Committee decided to approve the extension of the site inscribed in 1995. The Committee expressed its satisfaction that the protection of this property was extended to incorporate 22 Palladian villas. The name of the property was changed to "The City of Vicenza and the Palladian Villas of the Veneto."

- Statement of significance does not adequately defines the outstanding universal value of the site
- Proposal for text has been made by State Party: 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. Palladio's architectural complexes in the territory of Venice bear the extraordinary imprint that one single artist was able to leave on a territory, because the formal relationship between the villas and the landscape of the Veneto results in a unique quality that gives it a universal value. Criterion (ii): Through its architecture, the city and Palladio's architectural complexes in the territory of the Veneto have exerted exceptional influence on architectural, urban design and cultural landmark in most European countries and throughout the world

Boundaries and Buffer Zone

- Status of boundaries of the site: inadequate
- The boundary of the city of Vicenza and the three Palladian Villas at Vicenza is indicated on the nomination dossier of the site. The Municipalities involved have not even given

a boundary for each individual villa listed in the 1996 extension

- Buffer zone: only the historic centre of Vicenza has a buffer zone. The historic centre, which comprises the 23 Palladian monuments listed in the World Heritage List, is protected by the Detailed Plan for the Historic Centre. The three Palladian villas of the Comune di Vicenza have been identified by the current General Planning Guidelines as historic – architectural heritage, and are protected by an adequate protective girdle. As regards the Communes where the villas are located, in some cases the buildings and areas surrounding Palladian monuments have planning restrictions under Cultural Heritage and Landscape Code. Areas around several villas are protected, or protection is being defined, by landscape planning restrictions under Cultural Heritage and Landscape Code
- Further work is needed. The complexity of the problems illustrated in redefining the boundary would make it preferable to define the buffer zone when drawing up the breakdown of project schedules in the Management Plan, in the framework of the activities co-ordinated by the pilot committee

Status of Authenticity/Integrity

- World Heritage site values have been maintained
- Development of protection and valorisation activity on the building and landscape heritage listed in the WHL carried out from 1994 to date has used a criteria on exploiting the already acquired isolated restoration work methods with the implementation of general, wider programs aimed at safeguarding the formal and prospective aspects of the environment and the overall urban fabric

3. Protection

Legislative and Administrative Arrangements

- With regards to territorial planning, Regional Authority of the Veneto has set down a Regional Territorial Plan of Co-ordination approved in 1992 under the existing Regional Urban Law 61/85, which also has its effects on landscape planning. The procedure to update the plan has been started, moreover so as to meet the new Regional Urban Law 11/04 this plan sets out general guidelines for the protection of the main historic centres, including Vicenza, and of communities dispersed throughout the territory having a historic –

architectural property, such as the villas. Other regional planning tools, aimed at protecting and promoting especially valuable cultural and landscape zones are the Area Plans. The heritage buildings listed in the site all have planning restrictions for monument protection under *Cultural Heritage and Landscape Code*. The 23 buildings in the historic centre of Vicenza fall within zone of Historic Centre and come under the provisions of the Detailed Plan for the Historic Centre that classifies all of them as monumental buildings, ensuring their conservation

- The protection arrangements are considered sufficiently effective

Actions taken/proposed:

- Valorisation of the protected property and safeguards of the settings

4. Management

Use of site/property

- Urban centre; Historic Villas set in a rural landscape

Management /Administrative Body

- Steering group; set up: 19.07.2005; Mandate: The Pilot Committee mandate is tied to achievement of the objectives set down in the Draft Agreement and essentially, approval of the Management Plan and actuation of the actions assigned to each party in the actual Plan, though no precise term is established
- Management under protective legislation
- Site manager with responsibilities added to an existing job
- Levels of public authority who are primarily involved with the management of the site: national; regional; local; cultural institutions
- The current management system is sufficiently effective

Actions proposed:

- Co-ordination of promotion and tourist fruition policy on listed buildings
- Creation of information and communication system
- Territorial development policies

5. Management Plan

- Management plan under preparation
- Implementation commence: 12/2006
- Responsibility for over-seeing the implementation of the management plan and

monitoring its effectiveness: Municipality of Vicenza, Department Territorial Development; Province of Vicenza; Regional Authority of Veneto, Directorate of Culture; Regional Directorate for Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities

6. Financial Resources

Financial situation

- State Budget
- Regional Authority of the Veneto and Local Councils concerned
- Bank foundations and other private sources
- European Union
- Sufficient

7. Staffing Levels

- Number of staff: 2
- Concerning other professional duties, the Administrations employ their own staff. No answer can be given for the many privately owned buildings

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

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

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

- Educational, scientific exhibition activities of International Centre of Architectural Studies A. Palladio (C.I.S.A.): The Centre, directed by a scientific committee composed of leading European and North American experts, organises courses, seminars, publications and exhibitions not only dedicated to Palladio, but also architecture from ancient times to the twentieth century, as well as the problems of conservation and restoration of historic buildings. C.I.S.A. also has a specialist library and photo and document archives that are open to the public. The Centre also has a notable editorial activity
Cultural and research initiatives by Regional Institute for Villas of the Veneto (I.R.V.V.): The institute's scope of arranging, together with the owner or, in some cases even substituting it, the consolidation, restoration and promotion, as well as improving the use of villas that fall under Cultural Heritage and Landscape Code. The action of IRVV is moreover characterised by

intense cataloguing of the villas of the Veneto and promotional initiatives, such as exhibitions, congresses, concerts and publications

- Training available to stakeholders

9. Visitor Management

- Visitor statistics: 570.494 (the figures generally refer to all the properties of the city of Vicenza – buildings in the historic centre and 3 villas - ; 13 villas outside of Vicenza out of 21. Statistics processed for Province of Vicenza by APT - Tourist Promotion Agency-, referring to daily tourist attendance in the communes with buildings listed in the UNESCO site), 2003
- Visitor facilities: The city of Vicenza has two Provincial tourist information offices open the year round, which also provide a leaflet. The city constantly offers a good standard of cultural initiatives (exhibitions and courses by CISA Palladio, exhibitions in Basilica Palladiana, recitals at Teatro Olimpico). Some of the Villas offer different services as, information material, guided tours on request, hotel and accommodation services, cultural events, collections, audiovisuals, bookshop, coffee shop/wine bar, souvenir/guide shop, ample car and coach park

10. Scientific Studies

- Studies related to the value of the site; Condition surveys; The cultural activities of Centro Studi Andrea Palladio (C.I.S.A.) has supplied considerable archival and critical examination of the protected buildings and on conservation and restoration methods
- Studies used for management of site: the study and research programs have been the scientific reference in drawing up and actuating the conservation work on some of the principle buildings listed in the site and will be for many up and coming projects. Moreover these studies, channelled into the educational and informative activity promoted by Centro Studi Andrea Palladio, have contributed to spreading knowledge and awareness of the value of the site, both locally and on national and international levels

11. Education, Information and Awareness Building

- Not enough signs referring to World Heritage site

- World Heritage Convention Emblem used on some publications
- Adequate awareness of World Heritage among: visitors, local communities, local authorities
- Need for awareness raising: information, awareness and promotion action and a greater involvement of the manufacturing sector and local community in valorisation activities of the site
- Education strategy: steps have been made by the public administrations. The State administration has in fact taken advantage of the forceful collaboration of local bodies and foremost specialist institutions such as CISA and IRVV
- Heritage days; in 2005, CISA Palladio of Vicenza held a very significant exhibition, "Andrea Palladio and the Veneto villa. From Petrarca to Carlo Scarpa. The main exhibition was associated with additional fringe initiatives: guided tours to the main Palladian villas in the Veneto; Other initiatives involved individual buildings of the site, such as concerts and shows, educational cultural tours, congresses, exhibitions
- Web site available; www.sitiunesco.it (Association of Italian Cities of UNESCO World heritage); www.lamalcontenta.com (La Malcontenta s.r.l.); www.villadimaser.it (owners of Villa Barbaro at Maser); www.villagodi.com (owners of Villa Godi Malinverni)

12. Factors affecting the Property (State of Conservation)

Reactive monitoring reports

- World Heritage Committee sessions: 28th (2004); 29th (2005)

Conservation interventions

- Over the last decade significant restoration work has been carried out on most of the buildings in the UNESCO list
- Present state of conservation: Good

Threats and Risks to site

- Development pressure; natural disasters; agricultural/forestry regimes
- Specific issues: the site is affected, both as an urban centre and as a system of villas in the rural districts, by the usual pressures related to the effects of widespread urbanisation and use of the territory for the typical Veneto manufacturing economy. For some villas, like Villa Barbaro at Maser and Villa Pisani, the Local Councils indicate a risk of alterations

caused by farming in the surroundings to these sites. In some areas of the historic centre of Vicenza there is a medium risk of flooding; Also for some villas there is moderate risk of flooding

Emergency measures taken:

- Review of building and environment restrictions
- Provisional Plan for the hydro geological structure of the Brenta-Bacchiglione basin

13. Monitoring

- No formal monitoring programme
- Measures taken/planned: The monitoring program will be agreed and developed in the Management Plan, in the course of work carried out in application of the Draft Agreement; Quality markers will be used to monitor the state of conservation and valorisation of the site

14. Conclusions and Recommended Actions

- Main benefits of WH status: conservation; social; economic; management; cultural and promotional
- Strength/Weaknesses of management: - The need to requalify and to restructure the landscape around some properties belonging to the site; Visitor attendance levels do not reflect the importance of the site. - For some villas: a remote geographic location with respect to the main tourist routes and functions that do not enable adequate cultural fruition of the property. - Inadequate awareness of the value of the site by local communities and many businesses. - Insufficient advertising of the site

Future actions:

- Landscape requalification projects. Timeframe: ongoing
- Advertising and promoting of the value of the site. Timeframe: 2006-2010