

ITALY

Cathedral, Torre Civica and Piazza Grande, Modena

Brief description

The magnificent 12th-century cathedral at Modena, the work of two great artists (Lanfranco and Wiligelmo), is a supreme example of early Romanesque art. With its piazza and soaring tower, it testifies to the faith of its builders and the power of the Canossa dynasty who commissioned it.

1. Introduction

Year(s) of Inscription 1997

Agency responsible for site management

- Modena Municipality-Art Civic Museum
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2. Statement of Significance

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

Justification provided by the State Party

Special character of Modena's treasures: The studies of the last ten years have highlighted all the points of excellence of the monuments of Modena, emphasising their uniqueness and originality in the context of Italian and indeed European Romanesque sculpture. This strength of character is manifested both in the forms and the meanings, and often the solutions and artistic choices made were destined profoundly to influence the course of art in the Padana plain for centuries afterwards. The slabs bearing the scenes from Genesis, dateable probably in the first decade of the 12th century, are among the most precious European testaments of the revival of monumental stone sculpture after the darkness of the high medieval years. The figures rise from the stone and strive towards three-dimensional effects; they tell the true and palpitating story of humanity, giving rise to discussions of a new figurative language, a change comparable to the linguistic leap from Latin to Italian. This new artistic language continually drank

from antique founts: themes and motifs are revisited and exhibited in the sculpture with an enthusiasm glowing from recalling ancient forgotten expressions; very different from the erudition with which Nicola, the Campionesi and Antelami will look on the antique.

The enormous artistic value of the Corinthian-style capitals, at times as perfect as pre-Christ originals; the revisitation of themes such as the torch-stand Eros figures, perfectly understood in their ancient sense; vast-scale motifs such as the caryatid, the inhabited scroll, the leafed mask, the lions at the sides of the doors; the importance attributed to the commemorative inscriptions; all this makes Modena Cathedral one of the richest examples of the antique revival that characterised the twelfth century.

Wiligelmo's great innovations were to have a wide-reaching influence over late Italian medieval sculpture. This area of influence coincides with the territory of expansion of the use of the Lombard porch, supported by columns and guarded by lions, which we find for the first time in Modena, as a completion of the west doors and which will be seen again and again in Lombard and Emilian architecture of the 12th century.

The facade of Modena Cathedral bears one of the first known dedications to a sculptor: "Amongst sculptors, how worthy of honour and fame thou art, thy sculptures now show, o Wiligelmo" - high praise bearing witness not only to his importance in Modena, but also to the new status of artists in society at large, in particular Italian artists between the 12th and 13th centuries.

Among the most exciting novelties which have emerged from recent research is the year-by-year iconographic background to the sculpture of the facade. Here all of the various elements concur to form a message communicating all of the dangers and risks the human individual is exposed to, but always in the presence of the chance of final redemption. The facade responds to the medieval preoccupation with Good and Bad by sending a message of faith in the transitory nature of punishment and in the final triumph of the Righteous. The theme of Judgement, with terrifying outcome so diffuse in the France of the 12th century, is totally absent in Modena Cathedral. The sense of history prevails: Adam and Eve's sin is counter posed to the renewed humanity of Noah's family leaving the Ark to repopulate the world. The echo of classical themes, therefore, is all one with the epic and never apocalyptic dimension of the tale.

And behind this humanistic culture we can already sense some of the essential qualities of the Padana civilisation.

Modena Cathedral and the Development of Romanesque Art Notwithstanding various recent attempts to do so, it remains difficult to follow Wiligelmo's own contribution after the completion of the facade. The lateral flanks already seem to be the work of other sculptors, reminiscent of the master himself but indisputably distinct from him.

On the north side, the Porta della Pescheria displays the work of a very refined artist who nevertheless lacked the thrusting vitality of Wiligelmo, which is replaced by decorative energy and love of the anecdote; this particular taste is extended to the author of the Porta della Pescheria and that of the San Geminiano stories on the south side. This latter example is made even more interesting by the fact that the decoration of the portal clearly shows collaboration between two sculptors, almost as if the relief were started by one artist and finished by another.

The Porta dei Principi reveals something more about the construction work and its organisation. Both sculptors employed were of local extraction, and below the surface of Wiligelmo-influenced innovation can be detected a base of formal schemes which derive from high medieval carving traditions. The simplifications of the foliage, apart from displaying a taste for geometric intertwining, show how close these sculptors were to the local stone working traditions, and the contrast between their styles and the innovations that Wiligelmo will soon bring serves to underline the enormous differences in quality, invention and expression existing in the first decade of the 12th century.

Just as it is difficult to find traces of Wiligelmo's hand on the sides of the cathedral, it is well nigh impossible to detect them on the directly dependent works, such as the Abbey of Nonantola, Cremona Cathedral and the parish church of Quarantoli.

Wiligelmo's traditions are best sought for in the work of Nicolò, sculptor and possibly architect, trained most probably during the building of Modena cathedral and soon after master of his own studio. In 1122 Nicola was in Piacenza, and subsequently, together with his group, at the Sacra di San Michele in Piedmont (1138-1140); following on were Ferrara Cathedral (1135) and San Zeno in Verona (1138-1140). There are signs of his influence in France at Saint Jean de Maurienne, Embrun and La Chambre) and in Germany (Koenigslutter).

All of these buildings re-echo the experience gathered in Modena; and the influence lives on until the start of the 13th century, enshrined in the works of the Campionesi and Antelami in Parma.

Wiligelmo and Emilian Art: the studies carried out on the cathedral at the beginning of the present century did place in evidence the links existing between Modena and the Languedoc Romanesque, especially Toulouse and Moissac. This idea was especially connected with the evolution scheme suggested by Arthur Kingsley Porter in his splendid volume "Romanesque Sculpture on the Pilgrimage Roads" of 1923. Today it is largely thought that the so-distant figurative productions have in common not so much the fact that they were on the Pilgrim's itinerary, but more the fact that they all referred back to the models engendered in the provinces of the Roman Empire. From one end to the other of Europe sculptors were harking back to Antiquity for their techniques, models and inspiration.

This is confirmed by the presence of a certain number of foreigners at the Modena cathedral works, in particular that of a sculptor from Burgundy, who produced the relief with the figure of Truth tearing out the tongue of Fraud, as well as some capitals inside the cathedral. These sculptors were probably itinerants, employed for a time in the cathedral and bringers of their own styles and forms: the lengthened and stylised shape of the figure of Truth, as is the theme of the devils, is somewhat external to the general artistic tendencies and inclinations of the Modena works.

The connections with France show through most explicitly in the work of the Campionesi masters, thanks to the complex network of relations linking Provence to Pisa through the Emilian basin of Antelami.

Notwithstanding this, even recently attempts have been made to connect Wiligelmo to a German Goldsmith or, indeed, an artist formed in the ancient province of the Roman Empire, in Pannonia. In reality, on careful reflection it is impossible to ignore the Padana roots in his art. In 1935 Roberto Longhi wrote: "The Bologna of the 14th century has roots which go very deep into the Romanesque subsoil of the Padana valley. This is above all what gives it the strength to refuse the illustrious demotic created in Tuscany". Years after this judgement was recalled by Francesco Arcangeli in his introduction to the catalogue accompanying the celebrated exhibition "Nature and Expression in Bolognese-Emilian Art": "Without the remote precedent of Wiligelmo, without his new incarnation, the art of the Padana Valley, from Lombardy to Emilia would

not be comprehensible". It is undoubtedly true that Wiligelmo engendered both the naturalism of Lombardy and the "expressiveness" of Emilia, which figure as parallel and complementary both to each other and in his art, and the latter of which is most completely represented in the work of Vitale of Bologna.

Arcangeli sustains that the essence of Wiligelmo's art lies in the physical entity of the body, with its "soft, dense plasticity more than powerful which communicates to the stone an unmistakable sense of life emerging from inside it, like flesh and blood waking from a long hibernation and breathing gravely in the liberation of the air". This is the difference between the art of Modena Cathedral and the more intellectual, visionary French Romanesque, and it is these qualities which permeate through into Emilian art in the centuries that follow.

Modena Cathedral after the Middle Ages Without placing in doubt the importance of the Middle Ages, it is necessary to consider the life of the cathedral in the centuries that follow, in the light of the changing needs and inclinations of the populace. Happily the cathedral still boasts its great works, which can justly be considered of international historical and artistic importance.

The 14th century is documented in the polittico of Serafino de' Serafini (1384) but it is especially during the Renaissance that the cathedral is enriched with great masterpieces. In 1442 Agostino di Duccio created the reliefs with the stories of San Geminiano for the Forni chapel, now relocated on the south side of the cathedral. Another Florentine, Michele da Firenze, created the terracotta decorations on the great altar, known as the "statuine", displaying late Gothic influences. A reflection of the mathematical perspective of Piero della Francesca can be traced in the splendid Lendinara panels embellishing the choir stalls and the great Giudizio of the Bellincini chapel (circa 1470).

There are also great Renaissance masterpieces of Sculpture in the cathedral, such as Guido Mazzini's "Madonna della Pappa" (1483-1485) and the "Crib" of Antonio Begarelli (1527), the latter of which is graced with the influence of Raphael. Dosso Dossi's ancon, with Saint Sebastian, St. John the Baptist and San Gerolamo, is dated at about 1522.

As provided in ICOMOS evaluation

Qualities: The monumental complex in Modena in many ways bears exceptional testimony to the cultural traditions of the 12th century - through the

relationship between the worship of relics and religious building, since the reason for the rebuilding of the cathedral was the translation of the body of San Geminiano, and through the link between ecclesiastical and civic initiative, as illustrated by the monuments in the Piazza Grande.

The rebuilding of Modena Cathedral in 1099 is a key landmark in medieval history for many reasons, of which two are of most importance. First, the building is a characteristic and documented example of the reuse of ancient remains, which was common practice in the Middle Ages before the quarries were reopened in the 12th and particularly the 13th centuries. Secondly, Modena Cathedral was, at the turn of the 11th and 12th centuries, one of the first buildings, and certainly the most important one, where collaboration between an architect (Lanfranco) and a sculptor (Wiligelmo) has been demonstrated by explicit inscriptions. It also marked the shift from a conception of artistic production emphasizing the quality of the buildings as a masterpiece or the munificence of its founder to a more modern concept in which the role of the creator is recognised.

Modena Cathedral is a very complete, integrated building which offers the exceptional combination of rich external decoration on its west facade and side portals, and remarkably well preserved interior decoration, notably its 12th century rood screen.

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

The joint creation of Lanfranco and Wiligelmo is a masterpiece of human creative genius in which a new dialectical relationship between architecture and sculpture was created in Romanesque art. The Modena complex bears exceptional witness to the cultural traditions of the 12th century and is one of the best examples of an architectural complex where religious and civic values are combined in a medieval Christian town.

Committee Decision

Bureau (June 1997): The Bureau recommended the Committee to inscribe this site on the World Heritage List on the basis of cultural criteria (i), (ii), (iii) and (iv). The joint creation of Lanfranco and Wiligelmo is a masterpiece of human creative genius in which a new dialectical relationship between architecture and sculpture was created in Romanesque art. The Modena complex bears exceptional witness to the cultural traditions of the 12th century and is one of the best examples of an

architectural complex where religious and civic values are combined in a medieval Christian town.

Session (1997): The Committee decided to inscribe this property on the basis of criteria (i), (ii), (iii) and (iv), considering that the joint creation of Lanfranco and Wiligelmo is a masterpiece of human creative genius in which a new dialectical relationship between architecture and sculpture was created in Romanesque art. The Modena complex bears exceptional witness to the cultural traditions of the 12th century and is one of the best examples of an architectural complex where religious and civic values are combined in a medieval Christian town.

- 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: currently, it is considered inappropriate. The protection zone contains the whole area of ancient Parsonages, Palazzo Comunale, and all of the building defining the area visual perimeter

Status of Authenticity/Integrity

- The nominated monumental complex is undeniably authentic as far as its design, form, materials, and function are concerned. The unfortunate addition of a modern building on the southern side of the square in the 1960s alerted the authorities responsible for the property. Currently, no changes able to affect either the authenticity or the integrity of the area has neither been planned nor is predictable

3. Protection

Legislative and Administrative Arrangements

- Some old constrictions related to individual building in the Complex exist; Emilia Regional Body for Architectural heritage and Landscape recently started a preliminary action for an "acknowledgement of cultural interest" to the Complex, under the legislation currently in force. The Modena Municipality Land Use, by officially recognizing the area in March 2004, is still the most complete preservation tool available, since it acknowledges the preservation areas identified by the Ministry Body and provides for the scientific and preservative renovation of the Cathedral, Torre Ghirlandina, and Palazzo Comunale. In addition, it ratifies some limitations in the possible destination of the buildings included in the area by only admitting

service and multi-purpose uses. Finally, it establishes that changes in use destinations can only take place following the presentation of a Building Recovery Plan. Conservation constrictions on individual monuments and control activities

- The protection arrangements are considered sufficiently effective

Actions taken/proposed:

- a) Acknowledging of an overall conservation law of the UNESCO Site; b) implementing a policy further limitation road traffic in the city Historical Centre; c) Setting up and starting a monitoring programme on the overall condition and periodical maintenance

4. Management

Use of site/property

- Visitor attraction; Urban centre; Religious use
- The Palazzo Comunale, included in the Buffer Area, is the base for several city offices including the Mayor's and Town Council offices. Piazza Grande, once the place where a market was held, is today a meeting point and a place where events and shows take place. Since 2000, a new Museum within the area is regularly available to visitors: the Cathedral Museum, where a huge religious and artistic inheritance connected with the thousand-year-old life of the Cathedral can be seen. A tour to the Civic Tower gives a view of the city centre seen from above. In the Piazza Torre nearby, a local street market with craft made products is periodically held

Management /Administrative Body

- Steering group formally constituted; its mandate: Creating a coordination among several bodies - Municipality, City Section, Emilia-Romagna Regional Board, Ministry Boards for cultural, archaeological and architectonic heritage, Province - by different ways involved in site management activities; its function: drafting of the 2005-2007 Site Management Plan
- Consensual management. Currently, the Municipality administration is committed in the drafting of a plan agreement with the Cathedral City Section, the three involved Ministry Boards - Architectural, Archaeological, and Cultural heritage Boards - and Modena Province, aimed at implementing the Management Plan currently being completed
- Site manager to be appointed

- Levels of public authority who are primarily involved with the management of the site: regional; local
- The current management system is sufficiently effective

Actions proposed:

- Increased coordination among the bodies involved

5. Management Plan

- Management plan under preparation
- Implementation starts: 01/2006
- Responsibility for over-seeing the implementation of the management plan and monitoring its effectiveness: Modena Municipality in collaboration with the Cathedral City Section, Emilia Regional Body for Architectural heritage and Landscape, Emilia Romagna Body for archaeological heritage, Modena and Reggio Emilia Bodies for cultural heritage, Emilia-Romagna Regional Directive Board, and Modena Province

6. Financial Resources

Financial situation

- State Budget; the three local Ministry Boards;
- Municipality; Cathedral/Curia Section; Region; Province; Cassa of Risparmio Foundation; private supporters
- Insufficient

7. Staffing Levels

- The whole staff variously dedicated to the area (preservation and conservation, management, promotion, etc) is employed within public institutions such as Municipality and Ministry Boards, thus being able to dedicate a minimal part of their work time to the area and, most of all, in lack of a real coordination on the actions undertaken by the different institutions involved. Such problem will be faced withing the Management Plan currently being written. Finally, the Cathedral Museum management and opening of Civic Tower "Ghirlandina" are completely entrusted to volunteer work

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

- Very good: conservation
- Good: management; promotion; interpretation; education; visitor management

- A 12-volunteer group shifting in groups of 2 people manages the Cathedral Museum, which were opened to the public during 2000. The public opening of Civic Tower is also assured by volunteers' associations (elderly people) and coordinated by the Cultural Department of Modena Municipality

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

- Experts on study, preservation and protection are available, reporting to Ministry Boards and modenese Civic Museums. Experts on ecclesiastical heritage and preservation are also available at the Ecclesiastical Heritage Department of Modena Curia, where the Cathedral Section refers to. Cathedral Museums, having a key role in the protection and knowledge of the artistic and religious heritage connected to the Cathedral, belong to the Province Museum System. Part of the volunteer staff working at the Cathedral Museum normally attends the training activities dedicated to such System. In addition, Modena Province-accredited tourist guide associations are also working in the area – through the Cathedral Museum Reception and the Municipality Tourist Office
- Training needs: Actions aimed at sensitizing both citizens and tourist on World Heritage values should be undertaken- which shall be considered within the Management Plan
- Training available to stakeholders

9. Visitor Management

- Visitor statistics: 10.086 (Since visitors of the Piazza and Duomo are impossible to count, data are referred to the amount of visitors of the Cathedral Museum and Torre Ghirlandina. In what deals with the Cathedral Museums, the count was made based on tickets. In what deals with Civic Tower instead, entries were counted based on the tickets sold during opening days), 2003
- Visitor facilities: As for the overall area, tourists may attend to the IAT, where guided visits may be reserved and information material can be found. As for the Cathedral Museums, the volunteer staff working there is normally willing to give visitors information, and there is professional tourist guide service. Fee-paying audio-guides in four languages (Italian, French, English, and German) for visiting both the

Museum and Cathedral are also available, as well as several dedicated publications and CDs – mainly in Italian. The public opening of Civic Tower is assured by volunteers' associations (elderly people) coordinated by the Culture Department. Within the 2005/2006 School-City Itineraries initiative, the Municipality Education Department proposes several journeys dedicated to the Cathedral, Piazza and Palazzo Comunale

10. Scientific Studies

- Risk assessment; Studies related to the value of the site; Monitoring exercises; Condition surveys; Archaeological surveys; Transportation studies
- A consistent and aware preservation policy was started at the end of 1960s. The current renovation campaign was preceded from the *Allarme per Wiligermo* exhibition of 1969, which allowed focusing on preservation problems of the monument while proving to be an excellent opportunity to sensitize the citizens, as well. The renovations on the facade (1977-1983) were accompanied by a huge surveying and study campaign. The 1984 initiatives are to be ideally connected with the *L'artista medievale* convention held in Modena, 1999. After the facade, renovations were fluently carried on. Such renovations were constantly documented by means of scientific papers. Parallel to this, the attention was focussed on the Civic Tower: during 1970s, a significant renovation intervention was carried out on external faces. In 2002 an *Agreement on an intervention plan aimed at the protection of Modena Cathedral and Torre Ghirlandina monumental complex* was undertaken. Such agreement allowed implementing a continuous monitoring system on the Cathedral and Tower by means of an advanced network of sensors and other devices recording the smallest change in the structure static. This project will allow to keep any structural movements due to both thermal variation and physical (geological, hydraulic, seismic, traffic) factors under control, as well as to define any intervention aimed at fixing such changes. Some internal lighting projects respectful of the Cathedral and the overall UNESCO area characteristics were also set up since 2000 up to the present. Works on the Cathedral were already completed; in the former case, they are being concluded

11. Education, Information and Awareness Building

- Not enough number of signs referring to World Heritage site
- World Heritage Convention Emblem used on some publications
- Adequate awareness of World Heritage among: local authorities
- Need for awareness raising: Among the initiatives planned in the immediate future there is the creation of an increased awareness of the world heritage value, as well as of how important it is for the city to be part of the UNESCO list, in the whole population range, though citizens have been constantly sensitised on the overall historical, artistically, and religious value of the complex. Training and research activities should also be strengthened, particularly in what deals with architectural aspects, by means of scholarships, internships, and training activities
- Heritage days: During 2006, in connection with the European-wide project "Transromanica The Romanesque routes of European Heritage", a series of divulgation events (free guided tours for children and adults) highlighting the world heritage status of the Cathedral, Tower and Piazza Grande complex will be promoted
- Local participation: volunteering activities

12. Factors affecting the Property (State of Conservation)

Reactive monitoring reports

- N/A

Conservation interventions

- The main preservation interventions carried out since the entering up to the present dealt with a renovation of the former Parsonage rooms, hosting the Cathedral Museums since 2000; Further preservation interventions and renovations have both partly been already carried out and planned in the immediate future on the Tower Ghirlandina and on the external side of the Cathedral, particularly on the face rose window. Following the 1996 earthquake, an *Agreement on an intervention plan aimed at the protection of Modena Cathedral and Torre Ghirlandina monumental complex* was reached. During the years 2003- 2004, the projects for the internal and external lighting of the Cathedral and Piazza were carried out. Several anti-seismic strengthening interventions are being carried out on Palazzo Comunale

- Present state of conservation: Patchy

Threats and Risks to site

- Environmental pressure; Natural disasters
- Specific issues: A) Risk factors can be seen in possible structural movements due to both thermal variations and physical (geological, hydraulic, seismic, traffic) factors. B) A very problematic aspect which had already been detected by the end of 1960s is connected with the preservation of the external covering of the Cathedral and Tower, constituted by several kinds of stone including different types of marble and calcareous stone. This last element is particularly subject to deteriorations caused by a combination of thermal sudden changes, atmospheric elements, and pollution. C) Some environmental risks connected with pollution do exist, though a policy of traffic road limitation and exhaust monitoring policy has been implemented by the Municipality for many years now in order to contain them. Further risk elements are to be found in a lowering of water-bearing strata and in subsidence, both of them being monitored by Modena Municipality Environment Department.
- Emergency measures taken: A) structural monitoring of the Cathedral and "Ghirlandina"; B) Setup of a maintenance plan

13. Monitoring

- Formal monitoring programme
- The monitoring program scheduled so far is partial anyway, since exclusively dealing with the structural aspects of the Cathedral and Torre Ghirlandina

14. Conclusions and Recommended Actions

- Main benefits of WH status: conservation; Tourism
- Strength/Weaknesses of management: for protection and management, it is very important to create a body and operational tool able to coordinate the activity of several subjects involved, create a plan and follow up its implementation; as for interpretation, an increased awareness of UNESCO values should be achieved. A better coordination and a strengthening of existing structures should be achieved in promotional and tourism terms in order to provide more efficient services, multi-language information material, and a specific Website

Future actions:

- Creating a coordination unit
- Promoting the Cathedral, Tower, and Piazza Grande as part of the UNESCO area
- Tourism Promotion Plan