

WORLD HERITAGE LIST

Urbino (Italy)

No 828

Identification

<i>Nomination</i>	The historic centre of Urbino
<i>Location</i>	Province of Pesaro, Marche Region
<i>State Party</i>	Italy
<i>Date</i>	1 July 1996

Justification by State Party

During the Renaissance period Urbino reached a very high cultural level because many scholars and artists lived and worked there. Some of the leading humanists of the time, such as Leone Battista Alberti, Marsilio Ficino, and Giovanni Bessarione, and mathematicians like Paul van Middelburg, came together at the court of the Montefeltro Duke Federico III, who ruled Urbino from 1444 to 1482, to create and implement outstanding cultural and urban projects.

Federico, the “New Prince,” was a military commander and a patron of the arts. He surrounded himself with distinguished artists, such as Maso di Bartolomeo, Luciano Laurana, Francesco di Giorgio Martini, Luca della Robbia, Paolo Uccello, Piero della Francesca, Melozzo da Forlì, Antonio del Pollaiuolo, Ambrogio Barocci, and Giovanni Santi. During his reign the city became a centre of European importance: Federico, whose court became a favoured staging post between Rome and other European cities, maintained diplomatic relations not only with the other Italian rulers but also with Louis IX of France and with Ferdinand II of Aragon and Naples. Urbino became a cultural and architectural model for other courts, and so elements from Federico’s palace can be recognized in the castles of Mathias I Corvinus in Hungary and that of Stanislas II in Prague. Urbino, the “ideal city,” was the birthplace of Raphael, Bramante, and Barocci, and among the celebrated figures who lived there were Luca Pacioli, Leonardo da Vinci, and Pietro Bembo.

The ducal palace, designed as a city within a city, is a monumental building of uncommon beauty; it has retained all the elements associated with the life of the court and is now the Galleria Nazionale delle Marche. It provides an exceptional overview of Italian art from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance. The decoration of

its rooms has a distinctive character, from its inlaid doors, bas-reliefs, friezes, and portals, and is a museum in itself. They contain tapestries, wooden sculptures, and paintings by, among others, Piero della Francesca, Paolo Uccello, Giusto da Gand, Luca Signorelli, Giovanni Santi, Federico Barocci, Raphael, and Titian. In the Diocesan Museum are displayed painted panels and precious religious furnishings from the churches of the city and the diocese. Raphael’s birthplace, an example of 14th century domestic architecture, contains paintings and a fresco of the Madonna and Child, originally attributed to Giovanni Santi and later to Raphael. These make up the outstanding heritage of painting and sculpture that constitute the nucleus of Urbino’s monumental secular and religious heritage.

The university was founded in 1506 by Duke Guidobaldo as the Collegio dei Dottori. Its original function was to house the administration and the judiciary of the city and to create an economic basis for the state. It is housed in the Palazzo Bonaventura, an ancient residence of the Montefeltro family.

Urbino stands comparison with other Italian and European “cities of art” such as Rome, Florence, and Venice by virtue of the cultural and artistic supremacy that it enjoyed during the Renaissance and the richness of its urban fabric, its architecture, and the works of art to be found there. Urbino established productive relationships with these cities, by diplomatic means and through the movement between them of artists and craftsmen, with the result that its own artistic elements were significantly influenced. This led to the spread of the so-called “court culture,” typical of the Renaissance, which transcended national frontiers and created a European *koine*. **Criteria i, ii, iv, and vi**

Category of property

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

History and Description

History

The 3rd-2nd century BC Roman fortifications here enclosed an urban area with an irregular street layout. Up to the 11th century the city remained within these limits, but it began to expand at the end of that century, requiring the construction of a new system of defensive walls.

In the mid 15th century Federico II da Montefeltro, under the rule of whose family the city and duchy of Urbino had passed at the end of the 12th century, undertook a radical rebuilding campaign in the city, though without disturbing its overall urban structure. The walls were rebuilt according to the designs of Leonardo da Vinci. The new Ducal Palace, the work of Luciano Laurana and Francesco di Giorgio Martini, was inserted with the minimum of disturbance, incorporating existing medieval structures. Along with the adjacent Cathedral (to the designs of Francesco di Giorgio), the Palace became the focus for the urban

fabric and its design the model for the new buildings in Renaissance style such as the Palazzo Luminati erected by the noble families of the ducal court. In other cases, the facades of both private houses and churches were reconstructed in the new style.

On the death of Duke Guidobaldo in 1508 Urbino passed to the Della Rovere family, and from 1631 to 1860 it was incorporated into the Papal States. During this period it experienced a general economic decline. However, the elevation of Gianfrancesco Albani, who was born in Urbino, to the papacy in 1700 as Clement XI saw a major campaign of restoration, especially on the churches and other religious buildings.

In the first half of the 19th century there were some changes to the street pattern, resulting in the demolition of a few old houses to permit the extension of some of the squares. At the same time a new theatre was built alongside Francesco di Giorgio's tower, designed by Vincenzo Ghinelli in a style and proportions that did not conflict with its surroundings.

Description

The fortified Roman settlement at Urbino was on the hill where the Ducal Palace now stands. The city was later expanded to a second hill lying to the north, giving the area now enclosed by the medieval walls (and proposed for inscription on the World Heritage List) an elongated outline.

The walls, with their ten bastions, survive virtually intact. There are several gates, notably the Porta Valbona, reconstructed in the 18th century. Dominating the whole town is the complex of the Ducal Palace and the Cathedral.

The west facade of the Ducal Palace (*Palazzo Ducale*) consists of two slender turrets flanking three loggias rising one above another. The main fabric is in brick, the window frames, the two upper loggias, and some decorative features being in stone. Elsewhere, the exterior is more austere, mainly in brick; on the side facing the Piazza del Risorgimento can be seen the facades of two medieval palaces skilfully incorporated by the Dalmatian architect Luciano Laurana into the Renaissance Palace.

The interior is more lavishly decorated, in particular the main courtyard, with its elegant arcading and carved ornamentation and inscriptions. The main floor (*piano nobile*) is reached by means of a fine monumental staircase, the work of Barocci. Most of the rooms, now occupied by the National Museum, make judicious but effective use of carved and painted decoration on walls, door-frames, friezes, chimney-pieces, and elsewhere.

The Throne Room, the largest in the Palace, contains a bas-relief of the Lion of St Mark. The Room of the Angels, one of the ducal private apartments, takes its name from the dancing *putti* on the fine chimney-piece. Its wooden doors are decorated with *trompe-l'œil* marquetry inlay, designed by Sandro Botticelli, as are the walls of the Duke's Study (which has a ceiling decorated by Florentine artists).

Also worthy of special mention is the *Sala d'Iole* in the Duchess's apartments, which takes its name from the carved caryatids on the chimney-piece.

The Cathedral (*Duomo*) was largely rebuilt in the late 18th century, during the papacy of Pius VII, completing the reconstruction left unfinished during the reign of Clement XI. The work of Giuseppe Valadier, Architect of the Holy See, it is in a restrained and elegant Neo-Classical style and contains some important works of art.

The 14th century Oratory of St John the Baptist contains some outstanding frescoes by the Signorelli. Also from the 14th century is the Church of San Francesco, the interior of which was redesigned in the 18th century. The Church of San Domenico is basically a 13th century structure, but an articulated portal was added in the Renaissance period, surmounted by an oriel window, the work of Luca della Robbia. The Santa Chiara and San Bernardino monasteries are good examples of Renaissance conventual architecture.

The birthplace of Raphael is a small 14th century building with a charming small interior courtyard; what was probably the artist's first important work, a Madonna and Child, is in the first-floor room where he was born in 1483.

Among the other secular buildings, the medieval Palazzo Odasi has an upper loggia with a wooden coffered ceiling decorated with coats of arms and the courtyard of the Palazzo Palma is notable for its arcaded courtyard with decorated columns. A bronze statue to Raphael stands in the small Piazzale Roma, from which the 16th century Alborno Fortress is reached.

Management and Protection

Legal status

The historic centre of Urbino, nominated for inscription on the World Heritage List, has been protected under the basic Italian Law on Environmental Protection (No 1497/1939) since 1969. In addition, some seventy of the buildings in the historic centre and the fortifications are also covered individually by the basic Law on Cultural Protection (No 1089/1939). Any interventions are thereby subject to Ministerial approval. There is also special legislation (Laws No 124/1968, 462/1985, and 103/1993) devoted to the restoration and rehabilitation of the city and its surrounding landscape in the territory of Montefeltro.

Management

Overall responsibility for ensuring the protection and management of the historic centre is with the Ministero per i Beni Culturali ed Ambientali, working through its regional Soprintendenza per i Beni Ambientali e Architettonici, working closely with the relevant agencies of the Marche Region, the Pesaro Province, and the Commune of Urbino.

The only indication in the nomination dossier of any form of overall management plan for the city or the historic centre was a brief reference to a plan drawn up by the architect Giancarlo di Carlo in 1964. No details were supplied beyond a statement that this architect had carried out restoration work on some monumental structures. A map was supplied showing a proposed

buffer zone, running only a short distance away from the nominated area, but without supporting documentation.

Conservation and Authenticity

Conservation history

The nomination dossier contains very little information on this point. The architect Giancarlo di Carlo (see above) is reported as having carried out restoration work on the ramp of Francesco di Giorgio and the Mercatale area. The Soprintendenza is involved in work in progress in various parts of the city, using ordinary and special funding: this is taking place on the fortifications, the Ducal Palace, the Albornoz Fortress, the Cathedral, and a number of other historic buildings.

Authenticity

The level of authenticity may be deemed to be high. Apart from work on certain monuments in the 18th and 19th centuries, little has changed since the flowering of the Renaissance period during the reign of Federico III.

Evaluation

Action by ICOMOS

An ICOMOS expert mission visited Urbino in January 1998. The ICOMOS International Committee on Historic Towns and Villages was also consulted on the cultural significance of Urbino.

Qualities

Urbino is a small Italian hill town that was for a short period one of the major cultural centres of Europe. As a result it was endowed with many buildings of very high quality, the work of the internationally regarded architects and artists attracted there by Duke Federico III and his son and successor Guidobaldo. The economic stagnation of the long period of Papal rule meant that the town did not undergo any radical changes, and so it has preserved its Renaissance appearance to a remarkably high level to the present day. Because of the ruler's political policies, the architects and artists of Urbino were in contact with many other parts of Europe, and their influence can be seen in other countries, especially in central Europe.

Comparative analysis

Unlike other major cultural centres, such as Florence or Venice, Urbino flourished for only a short time in the 15th century. It was this short flowering, when it attracted artists and scholars from all over Italy, that shaped its present-day form. This phenomenon cannot be duplicated elsewhere, either in Italy or other parts of Europe.

ICOMOS comments

The nomination dossier provided by the Italian authorities was, to say the least, exiguous. Lacking from it were details of the relevant legislation, even in summary form, nor was there any information about a master plan for the city, if this exists. The buffer zone originally proposed was wholly inadequate, comprising as it does a very narrow area around the walls of the

city. Since very large areas around the city have been protected by Italian Law No 1497/1939 on Environmental Protection, it would seem more appropriate to extend the formal buffer zone, as required by the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*, to at least the area that has been protected in this way since 1964.

The nomination was referred back to the State by Party by the Bureau at its meeting in June, requesting a. information on any urban plan(s) that may be in force, b. further information on conservation and restoration projects since the end of World War II, and c. a redefinition of the buffer zone, as proposed above. This information was supplied to ICOMOS, and found to be fully in accordance with the requirements of the *Operational Guidelines*.

Brief description

Urbino is a small hill town that experienced an astonishing cultural flowering in the 15th century, attracting to it artists and scholars from all over Italy and beyond, and influencing cultural developments elsewhere in Europe. Its Renaissance appearance has been remarkably well preserved, owing to its economic and cultural stagnation from the 16th century onwards.

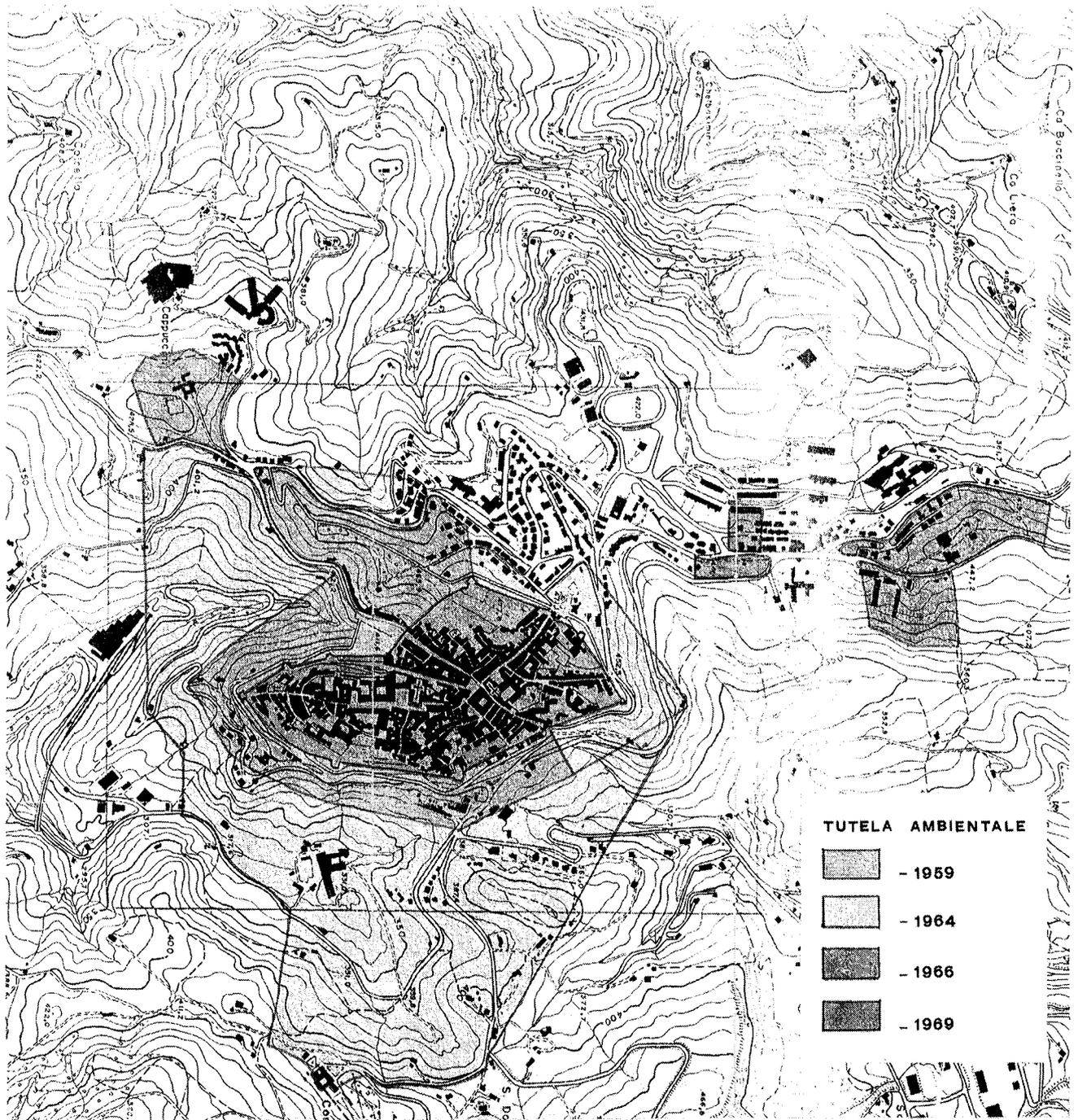
Recommendation

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

Criterion ii: During its short cultural pre-eminence, Urbino attracted some of the most outstanding humanist scholars and artists of the Renaissance, who created there an exceptional urban complex of remarkable homogeneity, the influence of which carried far into the rest of Europe.

Criterion iv: Urbino represents a pinnacle of Renaissance art and architecture, harmoniously adapted to its physical site and to its medieval precursor in an exceptional manner.

ICOMOS, October 1998



Le centre historique d'Urbino / The historic centre of Urbino :
Carte indiquant le bien proposé pour inscription et les zones de protection qui l'entourent.
 (Note : l'Etat Partie a fourni des cartes indiquant la zone tampon proposée mais il est difficile
 de les reproduire ici en raison de leur échelle) /
**Map showing nominated property and protected areas around it. (Note: the State Party has supplied
 maps showing the proposed buffer zone, but these are at a scale that makes them difficult to reproduce here).**



**Le centre historique d'Urbino / The historic centre of Urbino :
Vue aérienne / Aerial view**



**Le centre historique d'Urbino / The historic centre of Urbino :
Théâtre et Palais Ducal / Theatre and Ducal Palace**