



CASA DEL FASCIO (FASCIST PARTY HEADQUARTERS)

You can find this point of interest in Como - Path 5 - Stage 1

INFORMATION

Location: the Casa del Fascio is located in Como, piazza del Popolo

Paving: the large piazza in front of the Casa del Fascio is paved with stone slabs; the steps are made of stone

Architectural barriers: to access the piazza one has to climb a low step. Four steps lead to the landing which gives access to the building. On the left (when looking at the façade of the building), a ramp – approx. five metres wide – links the piazza and via Pessina at street level; on the right, another ramp does the same with via dei Partigiani

Access: access is from the entrance in piazza del Popolo

Services: parking available in the area; city and county buses stop nearby

Leisure and Food: bars, cafes and restaurants in the area; municipal garden

Other information: the building is currently the H.Q. of the Como Province Finance Police and can be visited exclusively by specially arranged guided tours

DESCRIPTION

This building, designed by Giuseppe Terragni, had a long and difficult gestation period (1932-1936), partly due to the differences of opinion aroused by his evident disagreement with the rhetoric of the Fascist “regime palaces”.

«The building is a perfectly regular, square-based prism with a height equal to half the base length, which measures 32.20 m. The strict plan would suggest explicit classical architectural tones, but it is tempered by the desire to create a dynamic balance between the volumes and voids of the façades, partly by using large glass areas that connect the inside and the outside. The main façade consists of a large, full, vertical rectangle. A large grid formed by the 20 empty rectangles of the balconies protrudes from this. The other faces, too, are characterized by an asymmetric pattern, each establishing its own intimate link with the town» (www.architetturadelmoderno.it). A spacious piazza is in front of the building, «proceeding logically and naturally from piazza del Duomo» and is the starting point for «an organic and intelligent centralizing of the most typical buildings of the Regime». «The entrance glass wall, made up of 18 French windows, projects the facing square indoors, while the many glass surfaces characterizing the whole building frame seem to be various views of the town, including the Cathedral, which can be seen from four different angles, in like manner. The entrance opens onto the central hall, a covered courtyard of sorts, overlooked by the Directory room, the offices and the landings. Light floods are divided into separate beams, which become larger where the rooms so require... Terragni designed the furniture, too: chairs, armchairs and shelving, as well as details such as handrails, doors, windows and shutters, staircases and bathrooms. The result is a *unicum*, where each detail is an architectural item taking part in the life of the whole; the pattern of a table is the same as that of the building. Here, objects mix walnut, oak, beech-wood or pinewood with tops in grey, green, white, black, and blue opal glass. Mario Radice was commissioned to design the chandelier in the reception room on the first-floor and some panels decorated with images of political propaganda, which are now lost (1934-1936)» (www.architetturadelmoderno.it). Luciano Caramel writes that these furnishings «due to their exceptional nature, constituted a significant sign of the precariousness of the relationships between rational architecture and the abstract visual arts. In fact, this is a unique case of real collaboration between new painting and new architecture, decided - as is known - only a posteriori». After the war, the former Casa del Fascio was devastated by “the mania to get rid of the past”, and was completely emptied, and so the furnishings were lost. The building itself was programmed to be the home to the new political parties of the infant Republic, and for some years was also the home to various associations where young people of all social classes could meet for cultural activities, united by the desire to create a better future. It has been the HQ of the Como Province of Finance Police since 1955.