



PALAZZO MANZI (Manzi Palace)

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

INFORMATION

Location: Palazzo Manzi overlooks Piazza Baracchini - the main square – and its entrance is at number 6.

Paving: Piazza Paracchini is paved with porphyry cubes; the pavement in front of the façade is made of porphyry cubes, too, while the palace hallway is paved with stone slabs.

Architectural barriers: to access Palazzo Manzi from the wide pavement which borders the north-eastern side of the square one must cross a low stone threshold leading to a hallway, approx. 4 metres long, separated from the interior by a second door. Beyond this door, after approx. 2 metres, you reach the inner courtyard by climbing 7 steps (a stairlift is available).

Access: access to Palazzo Manzi is by the large monumental portal in Piazza Paracchini.

Services: parking available in the square and in the immediate surroundings; automated teller machine and Chemist in Piazza Paracchini; Tourist Office and Public Library inside Palazzo Manzi.

Leisure and food: bars, cafes and restaurants in the area.

DESCRIPTION

(Silvia Fasana)

Palazzo Manzi is an austere four-storey building in neoclassic style overlooking Piazza Paracchini, the main square. The façade is marked by central pilaster strips; a large central balcony and two side balconies protrude from the first floor. The centre of the ground floor is opened by an imposing rounded arch stone portal, surmounted by the municipal coat of arms; the bronze doors of the original wooden portal carry the name of the Polti Petazzi family, which had it built in the early part of the 19th century, probably according to a plan drawn by Carlo Polti (who collaborated with Simone Cantoni), but traditionally attributed to architect Pietro Gilardoni. Beyond the portal, in the small hallway, one can find three memorial stones. The first, placed on the right wall in June 1985 «to serve as a warning to anyone still aspiring to enslave the Italian people», commemorates the capture and shooting of Fascist “hierarchs” in April 1945 as a tribute to the victims who fought with the antifascists and the Resistance. The second stone, placed on the left wall, is a memento of the donation of the Palace to the Municipality of Dongo in 1937 by Donna Giuseppina Manzi, the last descendant of the Polti Petazzi family. The third walled-in plaque stone, which, at the bottom, near the floor, shows the flood-level reached by the lake on 29 May 1810, is located on the left wall, too. From the hallway, by climbing seven steps, one reaches the elegant interior courtyard, introduced by four Tuscan-style stone columns.

On the ground floor, on the left, there are a number of offices of the Municipality of Dongo and the Tourist Office (the headquarters of the “Cooperativa Turistica Imago”) accessible from the courtyard, and, on the right, the **Museo della Fine della Guerra (End of the War Museum)**, inaugurated in April 2014 after radical refurbishment, hosting photographic and documentary evidence on this “page” of Italian history which was written right here, on Lake Como.

The upper floor, which can be accessed by a large staircase made of two flights of stairs protected by a wooden handrail, is opened on the right by the magnificent Sala d’Oro (*Golden Hall*), which takes its name from the profuse gilding on the furniture and decorations. The room, once a hall of honour, overlooking the large central balcony, is a rare Upper Lake Como example of neoclassical style. The vault (with *The Parnassus*, attributed to Giuseppe Lavelli) and the walls bear frescoes of allegorical subjects, mainly inspired by the typically Enlightenment theme of the civilizing action of reason and the arts, particularly music. The shorter side of the hall, on the right-hand side as you enter, is dominated by a large marble fireplace decorated with carved telamons and surmounted by an impressive mirror enclosed in a magnificent gilded wooden frame; the opposite wall is adorned by a sumptuous marble and gilded wood console, topped by a mirror very similar to the one on the right. The family library is kept in the adjacent room, and hosts about four thousand books on history, literature, and natural science, from the 16th and 19th centuries.

On the same floor, at the left of the staircase, one finds the magnificent family chapel, dedicated to the Immaculate Conception – a small jewel of sacred art. A niche, part of the altar embellished with marble and gilding made by sculptor Carlo Vitali of Varenna, hosts a beautiful wooden image of *Our Lady*. The frescoes which decorate the chapel are worthy of note: at the centre *The apocalyptic vision of St. John with the triumph of Mary over the seven-headed dragon*; in the corners, four round inlays depict important supporters of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception of Mary: from the right, Franciscan theologian *John Duns Scotus*, Spanish Cardinal *Francisco Ximenes de Cisneros*, and Franciscan Pope *Sixtus IV*. The fourth round inlay bore the image, unfortunately vanished, of Spanish Jesuit *Diego Lainez*.

(Drawn from Cooperativa Turistica Imago, *La chiesa di S. Maria in Martinico e Palazzo Manzi a Dongo*, Associazione Iubilantes, Como 2009)