



ROMAN COLUMNS

AN EXAMPLE OF RE-USE

You can find this point of interest in Como – Path 7 - Stage 1

INFORMATION

Location: the Roman columns can be seen in via Cesare Cantù 57, Como

Flooring: via Battisti is in porphyry tiles with stone-paved side bands; the steps leading to the portico are made of stone, while the flooring under the portico is made of concrete, with the exception of the band corresponding to the bases of the columns, which is made of stone.

Architectural barriers: the floor under the porch is separated from the street level by a low step (5 centimetres) which allows access. Continuing north along Via Cantù, the rise of the step progressively increases; at the entrance to the church of S. Cecilia and to the next-door entrance this step is divided into two lower ones to facilitate access.

Services: Car park in via Auguadri (800 parking spaces); urban and extra-urban bus stops available in the area outside the walled city; ATMs in via Giuliani, via Milano-corner of Piazza Vittoria; public toilets in the Viale Spallino underpass; pharmacy in via Cesare Cantù; Como Municipal Library in Piazzetta Venosto Lucati

Leisure and Catering: bars, cafes and shops of various kinds in the area; small public garden between Viale Spallino and via Milano

Other information: pedestrian area with limited traffic.

DESCRIPTION

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the architect Simone Cantoni, creator of Villa Olmo, in the midst of the neoclassical cultural climate, created a portico in front of the church of Santa Cecilia and the new headquarters of the Gymnasium and High School later named after Alessandro Volta, inserting eight columns of *cipollino* marble whose history dates back to the times of *Novum Comum*.

These monolithic columns come from far away, perhaps from the Greek island of Euboea, and certainly come from an important monumental complex in Como, perhaps from a portico that surrounded one of the squares of *Novum Comum*, probably the Forum square itself. When the Roman Empire entered into crisis, this portico was demolished and the columns were reused in the corners of the baptismal font of the baptistery of San Giovanni in Atrio, built in the 5th century in what is now Piazza San Fedele, in front of the ancient cathedral dedicated to Saint Euphemia.

This baptistery continued to be used even when the ancient cathedral changed its name and was rebuilt in Romanesque style with a dedication to the martyr San Fedele in the 12th century. Once its use ceased, the baptistery was transformed into a warehouse from where, at the beginning of the 19th century, the columns were taken by Cantoni and reused.

On the front of the portico supported by Roman columns, the architect Cantoni wanted to place the busts of nine illustrious figures from the city's history in special circular niches, four of which take us to the age of the Plinys: Caecilius (poet friend of Catullus), Caninius Rufus (poet friend of Pliny the Younger) and Pliny the Elder and Pliny the Younger themselves.