10. San Domenico Church
Piazza San Domenico

At the end of the 19th century the façade of the Church of the Preachers was seriously damaged: the 18th century portico had been torn down in 1874, the ruined masonry could be seen and the Gothic rose window had been closed and replaced with a large Baroque one. Traces of the demolished prothyrum were still clearly visible, along with the walled–up little windows on the sides and the little blind arcades of the old gable roof. In 1909–1910 the Committee for Historical and Artistic Bologna restored the façade to what was considered to be its original aspect.

San Domenico Church

Oratory of the Holy Spirit

11. Oratory of the Holy Spirit
Via Val d'Aposa

In 1892 Rubbiani studied the history of the 15th century oratory and hired skilled artisans to rebuild the ruined artistic terracottas, repaint the images of the saints in the realistic style of the 15th century and reopen the old windows, giving to the oratory the magnificent aspect it had when it was first designed and built.

12. Basilica of San Francesco
Piazza San Francesco

The San Francesco Church, due to the suppression of religious orders at the end of the 18th century, had been used as a shelter for troops and a warehouse, with no respect for its artistic value. The restoration works of the mid–19th century considerably changed the original aspect of the church. In 1886 a citizen committee was set up: the Committee for the restoration of the San Francesco Church, which asked Alfonso Rubbiani to study how to bring the monument back to its original state. The works started with the enhancement of the tombs of the jurists of the Studium (the so–called "glossators") and went on with the demolition of buildings that had been erected next to the church in the 17th and 18th centuries, such as the big lateral archway and the baroque chapels. Alfonso Rubbiani is buried at the foot of the altar in the Central Chapel.

13. Houses at 13 – 15 via Galliera

In 1906 the Committee, under the direction of Rubbiani, restored the original aspect of the building at number 13, which dates back to the second half of the 15th century. The house next to it, built at the end of the 15th century, also had a few old decorations; relying on these remains Rubbiani rebuilt the original windows, copying the style from Palazzo Ghisilardi in Via Manzoni 4 (that is now the Medieval Civic Museum), which dates back to the same age.

via Galliera

Texts: Paola Foschi – Archiginnasio public library
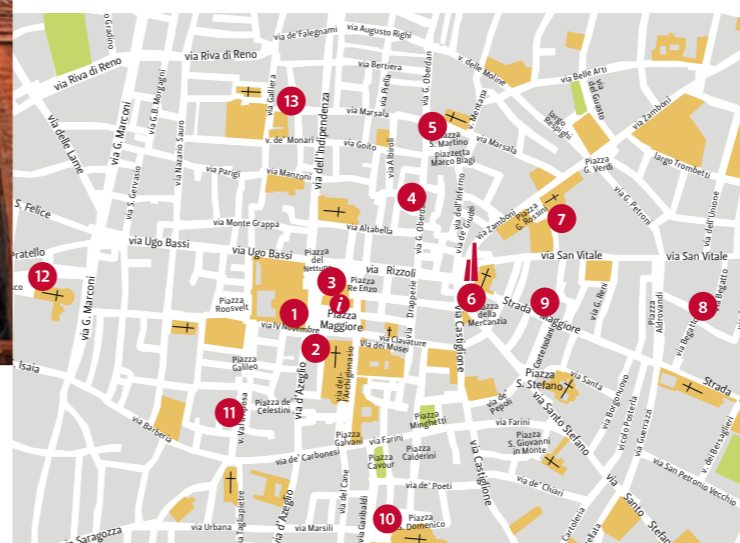
Alfonso Rubbiani

Rubbiani: a tribute to the past

Alfonso Rubbiani (1848 – 1913), a versatile intellectual, was an expert and a consultant for private citizens and the municipality in restoring the most significant monuments of the city. He founded the Committee for Historical and Artistic Bologna and Aemilia Ars. His studies and his inspiration gave to the city centre of Bologna the medieval and Renaissance look it has today.

Bologna Welcome

CITTÀ METROPOLITANA DI BOLOGNA

Comune di Bologna

Bologna Welcome

Palazzo Comunale

1. Palazzo Comunale
Via IV Novembre

The characteristic façade of the Palazzo Comunale in via IV Novembre still has a richly decorated double–arched window, which in 1908 appeared partially walled up and replaced with a rectangular opening, closed by means of shutters. Rubbiani studied its building period and supposed that it had been built around 1355–1360. Taking similar buildings in the Lombardy region as an example, it was possible to rebuild it from its remains and to close it with a glass wall in ancient style, that completes its elegant look.

2. Palazzo dei Notai
Piazza Maggiore

After careful historical studies, which highlighted the presence of two buildings of different periods built side by side, in 1908 Rubbiani changed the look of the façade, making it as similar as possible to the original building of the 14th century, which was the seat of the powerful guild of Notaries.

3. Palazzo Re Enzo
Piazza Re Enzo

In 1905 Rubbiani, noticing old traces visible in the masonry, found and opened again two triple–arched windows and rebuilt the battlements, whose foundation could still be seen at the top of the façade. Next to Palazzo Re Enzo there were still, on one side, the vault called "Voltone della Corda" and a block of old houses that was demolished between 1910 and 1918. On the other side there was the 16th century Palazzo della Rota.

Palazzo dei Notai

4. Casa Azzoguidi
Via San Nicolò 2

The 14th century house, that had been the seat of the typography of the famous Azzoguidi printers, had been plastered and did no longer show its original characteristics: under the direction of Alfonso Rubbiani the Committee brought back to light the lancet windows that had been walled up, the cotto tile arched lintels and the cotto tile ledge, that adorned the window sills. The painted decorations under the portico were restored and the little window was opened again: through this little window–peephole with cotto tile decorations one could see who was coming from Via Oberdan.

Palazzo Re Enzo

5. San Martino Maggiore Church
Piazza San Martino

In 1889 Rubbiani was asked to restore the Paltroni–Marescotti Chapel (the first to the left when you enter), in which he opened again the closed windows and cleaned the painted decoration. He closed the chapel with a 15th century style gate. In the same period he also opened again and restored the small chapel of Saints Biagio and Cristoforo under the bell tower, providing it also with a gate. In mid–17th century the small chapel was closed and a staircase was built inside it. The restoration of the Boncompagni Chapel (the first to the right) was carried out in 1899: Rubbiani opened again the two windows on the sides of the altar, destroying the two 18th century paintings by Nicola Bertuzzi. Such paintings were highly deteriorated, had been badly repainted in the past and were considered as being of low artistic value. Then he restored the original color of the gold decorations and of the walls and he replaced the wooden altar with the original marble one, that was found again.

6. Palazzo della Mercanzia
Piazza della Mercanzia

The façade of the Palazzo della Mercanzia was transformed in 1889 by Alfonso Rubbiani and Alfredo Tartarini, and the parts that had been added during the renovation of 1837 were removed. In 1897 Rubbiani also built the balustrade at the base of the pillars, the typical Medieval "pluteus" that prevented the mud of the street from dirtying the portico.

Casa Azzoguidi

7. San Giacomo Church
Piazza G. Rossini

The restoration of the San Giacomo Church was planned in 1907 as suggested by the Committee for Historical and Artistic Bologna and according to a general evaluation of the building carried out by the architect Luigi Corsini. The façade was restored as it was at the end of the 15th century. The rebuilding of the church roof, which brought back to light the original small cupolae, still existing in the attic, was designed by Rubbiani in the same years, but it was carried out by his apprentice and collaborator, the engineer Guido Zucchini, between 1913 and 1916.

8. House of via Begatto 19

This house is an example of Medieval architecture in Bologna, with a wooden portico, little lancet windows, cotto tile decorations and a bizarre little window–peephole on the side, which is also decorated with a fretworked cotto tile. It was about to be demolished many times, but in 1903 the Committee managed to preserve it and to bring it to its original state. Today this house adds character to the whole street, one of the most characteristic ones of the old town center.

House of via Begatto

9. Houses at 13–11 Strada Maggiore

The traces of lancet windows and cotto tile arched lintels still visible on the house at number 13 enabled Alfonso Rubbiani to bring the palace back to its original aspect, halfway between a Gothic and Renaissance style. The battlements were added, since they were consistent with the general style of noble houses of mid–15th century. The adjacent house at number 11 also kept traces of its original aspect of the late 14th century: the walled–up lancet windows, the arched lintels decorated with cotto tile stringcourses on the architrave and on the window sills. Rubbiani however could not restore the original wooden structure of the portico, as it had been replaced with brick pillars centuries earlier.