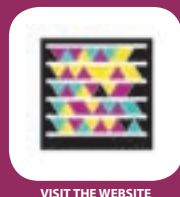


THE EXAGGERATED BICHROMY OF SAN GIOVANNI FUORCIVITAS

So named because it rose outside the first circle of city walls (VIII century) – some remains of which can still be seen under a glass plate on the opposite side of the street – the church of San Giovanni Fuorcivitas is the emblem of Romanesque Pistoia. A single nave with a truss roof, it was built, on a number of occasions, over the structure of an older foundation that formed around a priorate of canons. The complex had a cloister and a cemetery. The aspect that we see today dates back to the transformations carried out in the XII century, including Gruamonte's work, who had signed the architrave displaying *The Last Supper*. He may have been responsible for the design for the façade, on the north side and characterized by a two-tone marble covering. The white limestone, known as albarese, and the green marble (serpentine), are in fact such exaggerated background colors as to overshadow the strongly vertical architectural structure, characterized by blind arches superimposed and divided by semi-columns that frame the lozenges in the Pisan Romanesque style.

According to some scholars, this style with a marked bichromy, which has strong connections with some Mozarabic buildings of the period, may have spread as the result of contact with the pilgrimage routes that led to Galicia.



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**ROMANESQUE
PISTOIA:**
THE MAIN CHURCHES,
LINTELS,
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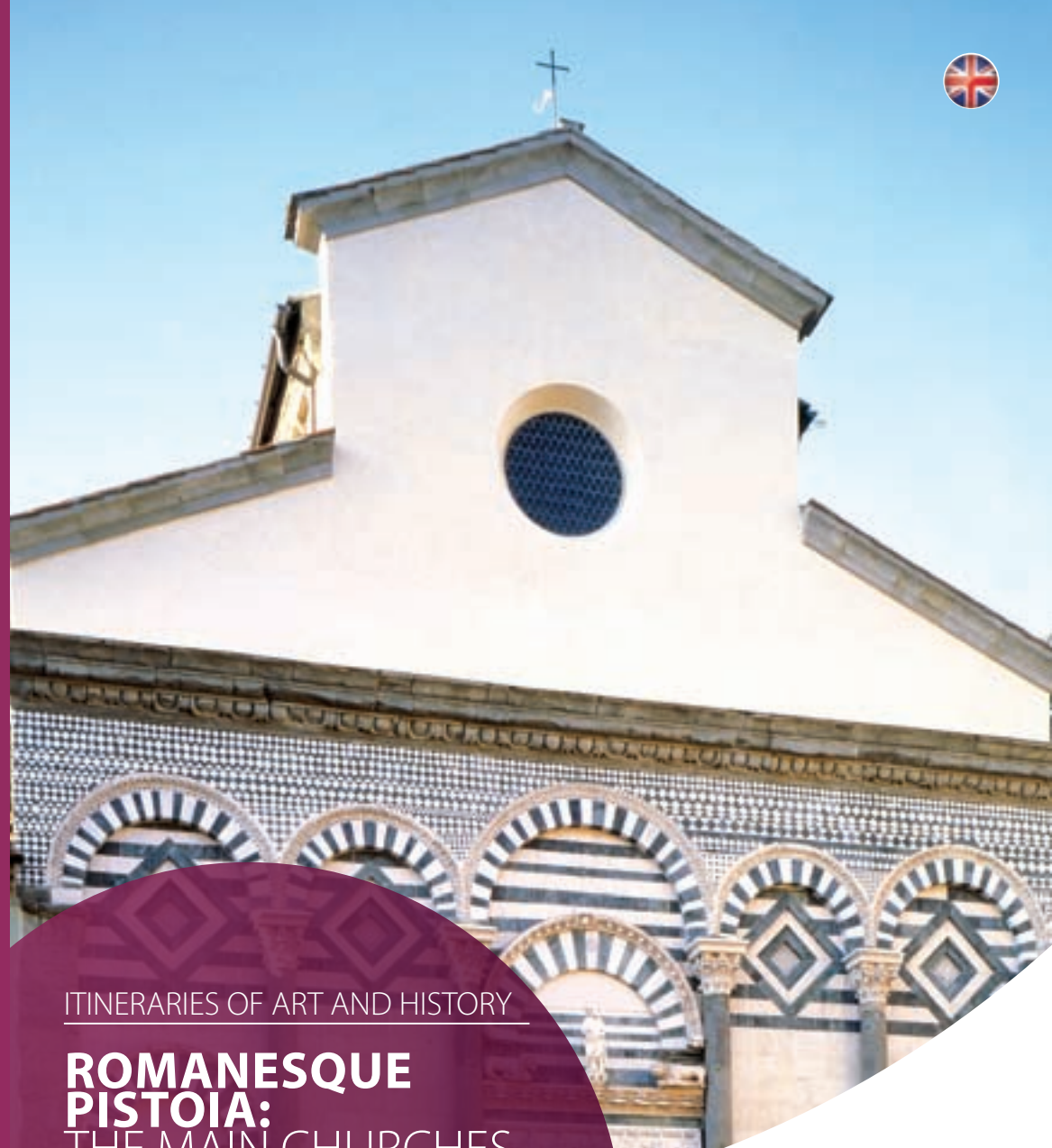
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PER IL TURISMO**
ABETONE PISTOIA
MONTAGNA P.S.E.



Intervento realizzato all'interno delle azioni previste dal progetto interregionale (L.135/2001 art. 5) "Valorizzazione comprensorio sciistico toso emiliano" cofinanziato da Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri - Dipartimento per lo sviluppo e la competitività del turismo - e dalla Regione Toscana



**ROMANESQUE
PISTOIA:**
THE MAIN CHURCHES,
LINTELS,
SCULPTURE
AND PAINTING

The territory of Pistoia experienced strong growth in architecture and in the arts beginning in its early years as an autonomous commune and especially following the arrival of the relic of St. James, which the city received in 1144. From that moment on and throughout the thirteenth century, leading artistic figures, from the major cultural centers of the time, worked to create works of great value. Some of those that have survived the changes and actions of time are displayed today for the pleasure of locals and visitors. The former live with these treasures, as often happens in Tuscany, with a naturalness dictated by habit: sometimes to forgetting the importance of these works, sometimes with undisguised pride. The latter are enchanted and

can recognize the ancient splendor of this medieval city. Romanesque architecture in Pistoia is characterized by truly original buildings whose bichromy – already seen in the oldest churches of Pisa and Lucca – finds meanings in the strong contrast between the local white albarese and the white marble from Carrara with the green serpentine from Prato. This marked bichromy was used to define the arched lintels, emphasize the repeating horizontals, crown the arches with sloping lozenges, and embellish the external decorations with dense geometric inlays. The building tradition in Pistoia was already being expressed in the early medieval churches located around the ancient Lombard center: simple one-room, sandstone buildings

that demonstrated a primitive focus on plastic decoration, like the eave brackets of San Michele in Bonaccio (which today houses a pharmacy) or in the still visible entrance to Sant'Anastasio, now completely incorporated into the houses and shops of La Sala.

Starting in the XI century, but even more by the mid-XII century, a new and more eloquent style flourished in the city. The basilica plan with three aisles divided by columns became the model for churches such as that of Sant'Andrea (formerly an ancient parish church with the baptismal function), San Bartolomeo



(site of a Benedictine monastery founded in ancient times by the Lombards) and San Giovanni Fuorcivitas. The façades of these religious buildings feature larger portals surmounted by polychrome marble lintels decorated with figures. This type of lintel is characteristic of Pistoia, the work of Guaramonte and his son Adeodato. The one at Sant'Andrea depicts a *Procession of the Magi* that probably comforted the travelers who, upon leaving the city to take the road that would lead them to the Apennine mountain passes, paid homage to those first pilgrims in Christian history. The one on San Bartolomeo – probably a work by Adeodato himself – shows the *Mission of the Apostles*. Finally, the lintel on San Giovanni Fuorcivitas with the *Last Supper* still shows slight traces of polychromy.

The church of San Pier Maggiore was built later and then rebuilt in the XIII century; it is set on a pre-existing Lombard foundation.

The works contained in these and other religious buildings are evidence of an important sculptural

industry, starting with the work of Maestro Guglielmo in the mid-XII century. He was the author of a now lost, ancient pulpit in the cathedral; however, some wonderful inlaid plutei can be found in the crypt. Continuing with the construction of the baptismal font in the baptistery, it is the work of Lanfranco da Como and dated 1226. We finish by naming only a few of other works by artists of the caliber of Guido da Como, Fra Guglielmo da Pisa, Girolamo da Como and Nicola Pisano, on which they must have worked throughout most of the XIII century.

Even the remains of the painted wall decorations and wooden panel paintings can be placed in a particular climate of artistic ferment with the works of Coppo di Marcovaldo and his son Salerno. These include some of their best known: the *Painted Cross* in the cathedral, the *Crucifixion* in the San Domenico chapter house, and the *Altarpiece of St. Francis with Episodes from His Life and Miracles After His Death* in the Town Museum, in addition, there are those by Manfredino d'Alberto



from whom, for example, have come down to us the wonderful frescoes on the walls of Santa Maria a Ripalta and the apse basin in San Bartolomeo.

All of these works of art take us back to a time when Pistoia had very important, internationally successful merchant-bankers and a strong growing economy; with complete freedom, it could afford to have the important names of the artists of the time come to the town.