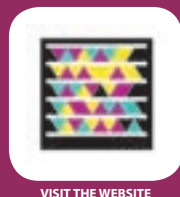


THE PULPIT OF GIOVANNI PISANO

Pistoia is known as the city of pulpits because of the large number of these liturgical furnishings seen in its churches. Among them all, the one by Giovanni Pisano in the Church of Sant'Andrea is surely the most remarkable. Carved between 1298 and 1301, it is truly one of the masterpieces of Gothic art. It is supported by seven red marble columns, some of which rest on the full-relief allegorical sculptures of a winged lion, a griffin, an eagle, a lioness with cubs, a lion with a horse in its teeth, and a telamon. The hexagonal plan of the structure is subdivided with an upward momentum assisted by the small trefoil arches. According to the model of the *Redemption*, an iconographic program unfolds from the bottom to the top, with the representation of the Old Testament *Prophets* and classical *Sibyls* in the arches and spandrels, and the manifestation of Christ with stories from New Testament on the five parapets. The first represents the *Annunciation*, the *Nativity*, the *Baptism of Jesus* and the *Announcement to the Shepherds*; the second the *Dream* and the *Adoration of the Magi*; the third, the *Massacre of the Innocents*; the fourth, the *Crucifixion*; and finally *The Last Judgment*.

The tetramorph (the four figures depicting the Evangelists according to Ezekiel's famous prophecy) facing the nave is crowned by the customary lectern in the form of an eagle, the symbol of John the Evangelist, the original of which is now at the Metropolitan Museum in New York.



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ITINERARIES OF ART AND HISTORY

GOTHIC PISTOIA, ITS MONUMENTS

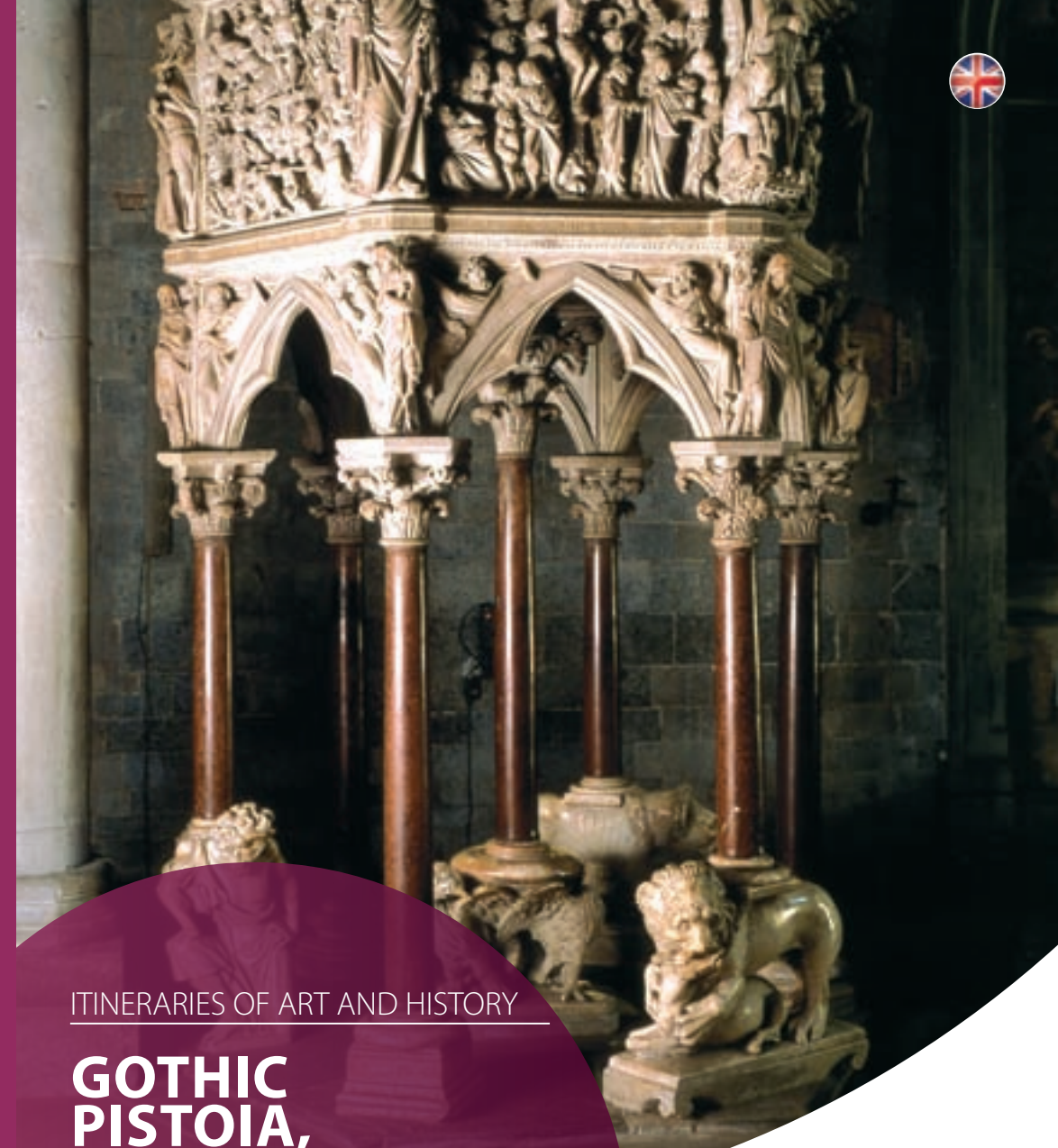


AGENZIA
PER IL TURISMO
ABETONE PISTOIA
MONTAGNA P.SE



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

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GOTHIC PISTOIA, ITS MONUMENTS

*Pistoia, ah, Pistoia! why resolve not
To burn thyself to ashes and so perish,
Since in ill-doing thou thy seed excellest?*
(translation by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow)

We start an analysis of Gothic art in Pistoia with the celebrated invective that Dante hurls at the city in Canto XIV of the *Inferno*. The great poet attributes to the progeny of Catilina the source of the character of Pistoia's citizens: quarrelsome to the point of fighting among themselves and thus submitting to the ambitions of nearby Florence. The artistic expressions of the Gothic period in Pistoia suffered from this subject- ion that began with the 1305-1306 siege by the Florentines and the Lucchesi. After a century of various attempts at independence, it ended

with Pistoia at the veritable hands of the *Dominante*. Fourteenth-century art in Pistoia conformed to the canons of Florence, Siena, and Bologna, with the arrival of artists who carried out important works in the city. The thriving artistic tradition of Pisa starting with the early Romanesque sculptures from the XII cent. was strengthened by the works of Nicola and Giovanni Pisano: the pulpit in Sant'Andrea, Giovanni's masterpiece, is also a culmination of a process aimed at a renewal of expressive forms in a naturalistic key, in search of a dramatic power and dynamism up to that time unknown. Still other famous artists came to Pistoia during the fourteenth century: for example, Cellino di Nese, who worked on the construction of

the Baptistery; the Sienese Giovanni d'Agostino and his son Agostino di Giovanni, the sculptor of Cino da Pistoia's tomb. In addition, beginning in 1287, a succession of various master goldsmiths came from Florence and Pisa for more than a century to create the silver altar of Sant'Iacopo. From the end of the thirteenth century and all throughout the fourteenth, there were construction workyards for: the Palazzo degli Anziani, or del Comune



(known traditionally as the Palazzo di Giano in honor of the podestà under whom the initial work was begun), made of sandstone with a façade and a large portico and orders of double- and triple-lancet windows; the Palazzo Pretorio, on the other side of the square; the Church of San Paolo with its cusped façade and portal; the beautifully frescoed Convento del Tau, dedicated to Saint Anthony the Abbot; that of San Lorenzo located on the bank of the Brana River; that of the Servants of Mary, or SS. Annunziata, today seen with the changes made to the structure between the XVII and XVIII centuries; as well as the large suburban churches of the new mendicant orders, San Francesco and San Domenico, decorated with frescoes that were used for instructional purposes as most of the population could not read. Painting in the city saw the work of Florentine artists from the Orcagna school, such as Niccolò di Tommaso, the most important fresco artist and who adorned the walls of the Church of the Tau; or such as Taddeo Gaddi, from a circle close to Giotto and who



was the artist of a panel painting for the main altar of San Giovanni Fuorcivitas. Other members of the Emilian school – like Dalmasio from Bologna and Paolo Serafini from Modena – worked on some of the most important fresco cycles in the city.

In this atmosphere of artistic fervor, a local school with its own, original characteristics is noted in the fourteenth century; its most famous exponents were Giovanni di Bartolomeo Cristiani and Antonio Vite, who worked in several of the city's churches and convents.