



FONDAZIONE BANCA DEL MONTE DI LOMBARDIA

# Pavia e la sua provincia



## 2-the Visconti Castle

Situated on the northern margins of the historic center of Pavia, is the Visconteo Castle, ordered to be built by Galeazzo Secondo Visconti in 1359.

He entrusted the project to the architect Bernardo da Venezia, who completed an elegant quadrilateral brick building with four corner towers and an internal court surrounded by porticos and lodging.

Today, unfortunately, the northern wing with the two towers is missing, demolished in 1527 during the Battle of Pavia.

Military presidio and, at the same time, residence of a refined and elegant court, the castle was described by Petrarca *the most noble of the many existing modern works*. It is completely surrounded by a moat, at one time fed by running waters, and defended by three fortified entrances, the outposts, in origin equipped with double drawbridges. Its powerful structure is alleviated by 124 elegant lancets, and even the tight barricade of swallow's tails, contribute to giving momentum and decorating the structure.

The internal court presents a colonnade of ample lancet arcs held up by white marble columns originating from the Lombardian Pre Alps.

The surface of the vaults conserve traces of the original blue tint, dotted by gold stars in relief.

On the ground floor the chapel of the palace is easily recognized thanks to the two portals, emphasized by the elegant hemming in brickwork and the Pietà of Michelino da Besozzo.

The lodging of the upper floor instead is opened by windows of different styles, four openings, two openings and one opening, that were added in the course of the centuries, made precious by refined rose windows in openwork brick.

At one time, a grand park extended for kilometers around the castle, closed by walls. It reached the Monastery of Certosa, that the Visconti had had erected as a place of devotion and as a family mausoleum. The park was crossed through by the Vernavola irrigation canal and included cultivated and forest areas. In these latter, the Captain of the park periodically introduced game so the Duke and his courtship could dedicate themselves to one of the most fashionable pastimes: hunting.

Another passion was books, and beginning in the second half of the third century until the end of the fourth, first the Visconti then the Sforza, formed in the castle, one of the most antique and supplied book collections of the era.

Since 1951 the Castle, renovated almost entirely to its original aspect by a campaign of restoration, is residence to the Civic Museums. Precious collections of archaeology, painting, sculpture, history and ethnography now enrich the antique rooms that were once of the Visconti.

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