



S. AGOSTINO CHURCH

The interior with three naves has completely lost the original Gothic verticalism following the interventions of the sixteenth century, which involved the addition of pilasters to the octagonal pillars originally in terracotta, the lowering of the arches of the bays to the sixth, but above all the substitution of the central trussed vault with the current barrel, which broke the relationship between the latter and the lateral (still trusses). The pictorial apparatus of the church, although with some striking alterations, has preserved one of the most significant evidence of the late Gothic period in Lombardy: the frescoes of the Cavalcabò Chapel. The cycle, rediscovered in 1950 when the vault was demolished and the masonry roof built in Baroque style by the Cremona architect Giovan Battista Zaist in 1736-37, was completely restored only in 1963. The decoration was ordered by Giovanna, daughter of Ugolino Cavalcabò, to remember his father who was barbarously killed by Cabrino Fondulo, his rival in the government of the city. The frescoes, originally distributed all over the wall, today are limited only to the vault, the basin and the sails in the apse.

Historical information

Originally the area on which today stands the church of St. Augustine was occupied by two other religious buildings: St. Thomas and St. James. In 1260 it was granted to the Hermits of St. Augustine, who had settled in this area for six years, to use the church of St. Thomas which, however, had to prove insufficient if in 1336 by Bishop Ugolino they were allowed to demolish St. James to build a larger structure and more in accordance with their needs of worship. Work began in 1339 and continued until 1345, under the guidance of Teodosio Guarneri. The original architectural features are still legible, even if altered by the interventions that underwent in the sixteenth century. The facade is a hut, strongly slender with blind gallery punctuated by slender columns. The internal division to three naves is recognizable also to the outside thanks to the presence of buttresses, terminating with pinnacles in botticino added in the XVIII sec. To this date the two lateral portals, not foreseen in the original plan, are also to refer to. The central rose window was lowered following the reconstruction of the vault, which also led to the opening of two oculi under the existing lateral.

The southern side of the church has four chapels. The first, dedicated to SS. Relics flank the facade and is probably coeval with the third, dedicated to the Virgin and built at the end of the fourteenth century (1399) by Ugolino Cavalcabò, lord of Cremona. The other two are smaller: the second is probably from the same period, even if the sixteenth-century interventions changed the original structure of which only a partially walled ogive window remains; the fourth, reported in the topographical plan of the city written by Antonio Campi in 1582, may have been placed during the above mentioned works, as indeed would also assume the construction technique used. Also the apse was affected by the sixteenth-century transformations, changing from rectangular to semicircular, with the opening of large windows. On the northern side stands the bell tower erected from 1461 in archaic forms, in fact the slender brick structure has a conical crowning, friezes with teeth, Czech arches and bell cell with lobed windows. Originally stood on this side also the convent with two large cloisters and the library, erected from 1589.

In 1734 some Franco-Piedmontese troops settled first in the convent and then in the church that was transformed into a hospital. Upon their departure, in 1736, work began on the restoration of the building that involved the reconstruction of the altars, the opening of new windows, the enlargement of the presbytery and the elevation of the high altar. With the advent of the Cisalpine Republic the order was secularized, the convent was first alienated and then destroyed in 1813. Ordinary maintenance works were carried out in the nineteenth century, while major interventions that concerned especially the chapels, were carried out between 1951 and 1953. The last cleaning and restoration campaign of the latter began in the second half of the 1990s.



(excerpt from www.lombardiabeniculturali.it)