

A journey to discover 14th century Rimini: Palazzi dell'Arte Rimini, Sant'Agostino, the Malatestiano Temple and the City Museum.

Giotto's move to Rimini around 1300 contributed to the flourishing of a vast array of artists, miniaturists, painters and fresco artists, who also worked outside the Malatesta domain, throughout Romagna, the Marches, Veneto and even on the other side of the Adriatic, in Dalmatia.

It was precisely from their relations with the Church of the Orient that the artists of 14th century Rimini drew poetic and spiritual elements that no other contemporary Italian school possessed. This led to Giotto's novelties being combined with the most archaic Byzantine iconographies. The result of this fusion was a relationship of contrasts, hieratic, but full of sentimental intensity.

Neri, Giovanni, Giuliano, Zangolo, Francesco, Pietro, and Giovanni Baronzio contributed to an incredible period of art, following in Giotto's footsteps, but with peculiar and distinguishable stylistic features that made Rimini, even if only briefly, a leading artistic and cultural location, considered as the most important form of 14th century pictorial expression after Florence and Siena.

To discover and admire this local artistic excellence, the route includes several stops: PART, the new Museum of Contemporary Art in Rimini, the two major churches of the city, the Church of Sant'Agostino with its presbytery decorated with beautiful frescoes, the Malatesta Temple, which houses Giotto's crucifix, and the City Museum, where you can admire works belonging to the main masters of the Rimini school, Giovanni and Giuliano da Rimini and Baronzio.

PART - PALAZZI DELL'ARTE RIMINI

It is precisely at Part (Palazzi dell'Arte Rimini), in a fresh and unusual dialogue with works of contemporary art in the restored medieval buildings of the Sala dell'Arengo, that the Last Judgement (about 1310), a large fresco by Giovanni and Giuliano da Rimini's painters, finds spectacular visibility. This is where our tour of 14th century Rimini begins. It was the earthquake of 17 May 1916 that unexpectedly revealed, in the apse and in the part above the triumphal arch of the Church of San Giovanni Evangelista, called Sant'Agostino, the grandiose painted scene depicting the Last Judgement, hidden by the 18th century ceiling. It was precisely the discovery of this and other frescoes in the church of Sant'Agostino that decreed, prompting further studies, the recognition of a real local 14th century painting school. The Last Judgement was painted in the tympanum of the triumphal arch of the presbytery of the Church of Sant'Agostino. The fresco, restored by Giovanni Nave between 1917 and 1925, was placed in the Salone dell'Arengo in 1926, where an exhibition of the recovered 14th century works with photographic documentation had already been hosted. There it was kept until 1944 when, in order to protect it from the devastation of the occupying troops, it was fortunately transferred to the Gambalunga Library, and then returned to the Arengo where it remained until it was moved to its own position in the 14th century itinerary in the City Museum in 1990.

The lower section depicts the apostles' congregation with St. John the Evangelist and St. Peter and, on the right, St. Bartholomew. They are in the presence of Christ the Judge, largely lost, flanked by angels

carrying instruments of the Passion and the Labarum of the Resurrection; on the left is the Virgin and on the right St. John the Baptist. At the top are angels playing trumpets, carrying palms and crowns to the elect, while on the right other angels with shields and spears drive the outcasts to hell. The composition was completed at the bottom with a representation of the resurrection of the dead.

CHURCH OF SANT'AGOSTINO

From the polyphora of the Arengo, where this monumental and rare masterpiece of Italian art of the Middle Ages is now kept, you can see the **church of Sant'Agostino**, the original site of the Last Judgement and ideally the second stop on this tour.

The 14th century cycle found in Sant'Agostino immediately stirs an amazed admiration: it is a poem told on the walls, merging beauty and mystery, the mysticism of the Gospel narrative and the depth of devotion. A story that exalts the patron saint of the church, St. John the Evangelist, while also highlighting the triumph of Christ, the great blessing Redeemer, mitigated by the sumptuous image of Our Lady in Majesty. The quality of this cycle of frescoes was to be a reference for second generation painters, such as Pietro da Rimini. The church is a precious surviving example of the medieval age of the city, despite the liturgical space has undergone radical transformations in the '600 and '700 and complex, even calamitous, conservation attempts.

Among the examples of the Rimini School, the pictorial cycle is the most complete and best preserved in the city, a joint undertaking by the brothers Giovanni, Giuliano, and Zangolo who worked with a shared artistic language for about fifty years, interrupting their work during the Plague of 1348 which decimated two thirds of the population of Rimini and was probably also the cause of the disappearance from the art scene of the 14th century Rimini School.

MALATESTIANO TEMPLE

A fundamental stop is a visit to the **Malatestiano Temple**, Rimini's cathedral. Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta radically transformed the original building, giving the ancient Franciscan convent church the forms that make it the emblem of Italian Humanism and a unique treasure. Our tour cannot but pay homage to the work that acted as a launchpad for the growth of the 14th century Rimini School: **Giotto's Crucifix**. Painted by Giotto (Colle di Vespignanoca 1267 - Florence 1337) for the church of the Franciscans in 1299 or at the beginning of '300, the year of the Jubilee, the great Crucifix, which has lost its original tips, placed in the centre of the apse basin, appears to be a surviving part of a more complex set of Giotto's apsidal frescoes commissioned by the Malatestas, which disappeared due to the renovations of Leon Battista Alberti.

The Crucifix on panel in the Temple is the prototype for the subsequent crucifixes of the Rimini school, scattered throughout the diocese. In the new Albertian architectural space, partially unfinished on the outside, Giotto's Crucifix, a surviving fragment of the Gothic temple, is the first truly modern cross of the Florentine painter, superseding the experiments begun by Cimabue, in a refined balance of the body of Christ, given form by a subtle chiaroscuro, in a new physicality that already contains the drama and pain of the world.

CITY MUSEUM

The circular route ends in the rooms of the **City Museum**, in the section **dedicated to 14th century Rimini**, which is a cluster of true masterpieces, tempera paintings on wood, and stone and sculptural findings from the period.

A stone kept here from the cemetery of San Francesco documents the burial of two thousand plague victims in 1348, a date that coincides with the disappearance from the artistic scene of the 14th century Rimini School that had worked throughout Romagna, Marche and Veneto. The Malatesta family had a lot to do with their spread. The Malatestas were also the major indirect patrons of the Rimini painters, offering protection and consent to their works.

In these rooms you can see the **Diotallevi Crucifix**, which belonged to the Marquis Aduato who left the work to the Municipality of Rimini in 1936. Attributed to Giovanni da Rimini, the highest artist of the school, it is still exquisitely Gothic in its accents, with the diaphanous body of Christ and the saints in the lateral apexes. And then there is the **Polyptych of the Crucifixion**, with Saints Cosmas and Damian, Catherine and Barbara, with a finely punched gold background; **Stories of the Passion of Christ** by Giovanni Baronzio, another tempera on wood that was originally part of a dossal in the church of the Franciscans of Verucchio; and again the **Spina Crucifix**, from the name of the original owner, with its exquisite accuracy and

execution, and the presence of the donor at the bottom of the panel; the **two small panels with the Resurrection** and **Noli me tangere**, from the English Dixon collection attributed to Pietro da Rimini. Last but not least, among other works, the **Polyptych of the Coronation of the Virgin** by Giuliano da Rimini from the Audiface Diotallevi collection.