

ART & ARCHITECTURE

TUSCANY

Anne Mueller von der Haegen
Ruth Strasser

*h.f.*ullmann

Lucca

In the fertile plain of the Serchio between the Apuan Alps and Monte Pisano lies one of the most engaging of Tuscan provincial capitals. Confined within 16th- and 17th-century walls and bastions, it is the very image of an enclosed city.

Ligurians and Etruscans settled here, and in the 3rd century B.C. there was a Celtic Ligurian settlement called *Luk* (marsh). The name was taken over by the Romans as the colony of *Luca* in 180 B.C. It lay at the junction of important long-distance roads, and a town grew up with a grid layout that is still evident. Here, Caesar, Pompey, and Crassus met in 56 B.C. to form the Triumvirate.

In 571, the Lombards made Lucca an episcopal seat. Under the Franks, the town remained the center of the county of Tuscia. Its position on the Via Francigena, together with maritime trade via nearby Pisa, promoted commercial growth. Lucca was mainly a center for luxury goods – gold leaf, brocades, and silk – distributed throughout Europe and in the Orient. Until the late 11th century, the prosperous city contained the only royal mint in central Italy.

Ambitions for independence first surfaced in 1080 with the election of the city's own consuls, and were finally realized under Frederick Barbarossa in 1162.

There followed a period of economic prosperity and peace, during which the main Romanesque buildings of Lucca were constructed.

In the 13th and 14th centuries, intense rivalry between Florence and Pisa led to economic and political difficulties. A state of near civil war resulted, inducing local craftsmen to emigrate to Florence or Venice, taking their craft skills and experience with them.

From 1316, the city was weakened by the over-ambitious territorial claims of its ruler, Castruccio Castracani, and after his death in 1328 Pisa took control. Forty years later, Emperor Charles IV gave Lucca a charter of independence. From 1400, peace and commercial growth returned under the *signoria* of the merchant Paolo Guinigi, whose family built the tower with the seven holm oaks – one of the emblems of Lucca – growing on its top.

After the restoration of the republic in 1430, Lucca remained the only independent Tuscan city until the French invasion in 1799. Napoleon gave it to his sister Elisa Baciocchi as a principality in 1805. The Congress of Vienna subsequently installed Maria-Luisa of Bourbon-Parma as regent. In 1847, not long before Italy was united, her son Lodovico ceded the city to the Grand Duchy of Tuscany.

Aerial view of the Piazza Anfiteatro



Le Mura – the City Walls

The massive, still completely intact fortified wall of Lucca is the fourth in the history of the city, following the previous Roman, Lombard and “communal” walls. As previous walls were rendered inadequate by the invention of new weapons of war, further bastions (*baluardi*) for cannon were erected forward of the walls at regular intervals in the course of the 15th century. When the best-known military architects subsequently began constructing a new wall in the mid-16th century, these bastions were incorporated in the layout. The work was completed in 1650, after enormous financial expenditure and the use of about 6 million bricks.

The walls total over 2¹/₂ miles (4.2 km) in length and consist of 11 earthworks that are up to 98 feet (30 m) wide at the base and are defended by 40-foot (12 m) high external brick walls. Beyond that is a 115-foot (35 m) wide moat once filled with water, and beyond that again an external earthwork for the gunners. These walls were never put to the test – except when the Serchio flooded in 1812. The Lucchesi are very proud that their city never came under the control of the Medici grand dukes, and still distinguish between those born *fuori* (outside) or – like real Lucchesi – *dentro le mura* (inside the walls).

Duomo S. Maria del Fiore

Along with St. Peter's in Rome and Milan cathedral, S. Maria del Fiore is one of the biggest cathedrals in the Christian world. Dedicated to the Virgin Mary, it was begun in 1296 by Arnolfo di Cambio (c. 1245–1302). From 1417 at the latest, Brunelleschi (1377–1446) was recorded at work on the dome. The gold ball at the top was in place by 1471, but the marble cladding of the façade was added only in the 19th century.

The view along the south wall presents an expanse of white, green, and pink marble. The clear articulation and blind arcades in the choir chapels are based on the decoration of the baptistery. The ground plan is a Latin cross with a nave and two aisles. The giant dome (rising to over 350 feet – 107 meters – overall) on its lofty drum stands above an octagonal crossing, which is flanked on the east, north, and south sides by apses, interspersed with sacristies. The smaller domes on the choir chapels and the “exedras”

over the sacristies help to support the weight of the drum. Eight marble ribs run from the corners of the drum up to the lantern, their weight being carried downwards by respond buttresses. The combination of structural and aesthetic features looks obvious to modern eyes, but was absolutely innovative in its day.





Ponte Vecchio

There was a bridge across the Arno at its narrowest point even in Roman days, as a prolongation of the Via Cassia. Over the years several wooden structures were carried away by floods. The first stone bridge was the Ponte Vecchio, begun in 1345. Even in medieval times, the city derived considerable revenues from renting the shops on the bridge.

The desire of Cosimo I to have a safe link between the Palazzo Vecchio and his new residence over the Arno, the Palazzo Pitti, led to a major disruption of life on the bridge. Vasari constructed a walkway (now known as the “Corridoio Vasariano”) through the Uffizi, along the river and over the bridge. The route runs over the houses and is recognizable from the barred windows. According to a decree of 1595 that is still in effect, only goldsmiths can offer their wares on the bridge.



Piazza Grande

The trapezoid Piazza Grande stretches out below the Medici fortress. It has been the focal point of public life in Arezzo since ancient times. The traditional equestrian jousts, the *Giostra del Saracino*, dating back to the 16th century, still take place here, as does the famous antique fair. The Piazza's

appearance dates largely from the 13th and 14th centuries. Wooden balconies still divide the narrow medieval houses, as they did when they were first built. There are still towers and house-towers dating back to the 13th century – on the east side is that of the Palazzo Lapoli and on the south side is the house-tower of the Cofani family.

The late Romanesque apse of the 12th century Pieve S. Maria dominates the west side



Palazzo Comunale

The palazzo with the dovetailed Ghibelline battlements was built for the town council in 1333. The tower also dates back to this time and the clock to 1468. The frescoed town hall on the first floor is reached through a portico-covered inner courtyard and a Renaissance staircase.

Duomo S. Donato

Work on the three-story basilica began in 1277. The avoidance of marble incrustation and the simplicity of the construction, which has no transept, clearly show the influence of the mendicant orders on church architecture.

The cathedral was completed in several stages. Arezzo had been a diocesan town

Piazza del Campo

“Il Campo” (the field), as the square is known among the Sieneze, is one of the most impressive medieval squares of Italy. Set in a hollow in the shell shape of an ancient theater, with its continuation over the market square behind the Palazzo Pubblico leading on to open ground, the square has, since the 13th century, linked the hills of Siena.

The square received its characteristic paving in 1347. The warm red of the brick contrasts with the pale bands of travertine, which divide the square into nine segments in a rayed shape starting from the lowest point by the Palazzo Pubblico, a reminder of the rule of the Sieneze guilds, which brought stability from 1287 to 1355. The seat of the “Council of the Nine” was thereby symbolically linked to the square and the city. Since 1297, rigorous building restrictions (though this was not always adhered to in later centuries) have resulted in a unified appearance of the buildings fronting the square. Through eleven roads and alleys, the people could pour into the square when the great bell of the “Mangia” tower sounded and the proclamations of the government were to be heard, or as in 1260 when the victory over Florence was celebrated. Here, in the 15th century, St. Bernard preached against civil war, and here, every year, the traditional celebration of the Palio is held, a reminder of the Middle Ages.



La Torre Pendente – the Leaning Tower of Pisa

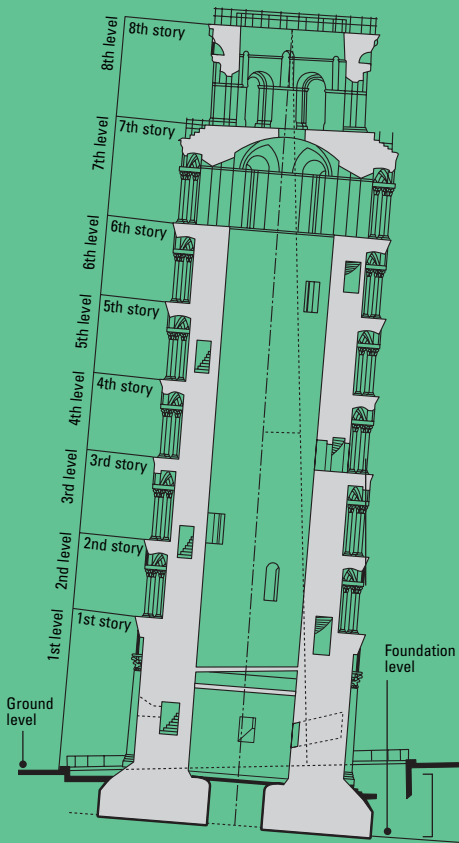


Diagram of the Tower of Pisa

The present-day southward tilt of the tower – part of many Pisans' identity – is 17 feet 1 inch (5.9 m) from vertical, measured at the top of the belfry. Despite many scientific investigations and calculations, it has not yet been established with any certainty whether the tower will actually collapse, either in the near or perhaps distant future.

Whatever the identity of the original architect – Bonanus or, as the latest research suggests, Gerardo di Gerardo – he knew about the sandy, unstable subsoil. Soils in the eastern part of the Piazza dei Miracoli are most stable in the top level of sand and clay. A further soft, yielding layer of sand and minerals follows down to a depth of 130 feet (40 m). In these circumstances, on August 9, 1173, when the ground was totally dry and the water at its lowest, a circular pit was dug about 10 feet (3 m) deep, with a diameter of about 65 feet (20 m). Into this was poured a stone pitching layer about 16 inches (40 cm) thick, and that 2,747 cubic feet (700 cubic meters) of rubble, bricks, and mortar were added up to surface level.

Building began on top of this: first a socle with a few steps and on that the double wall of the inner hollow cylinder. At ground floor level this is still 13 feet (3.9 m) thick, but it narrows to 8 feet (2.4 m) further up. The inside wall is made of randomly coursed mortared rubble from the Pisan hills. The outside is faced with marble

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Frontispiece:
Cypress alley and fields near Chianciano

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