

# CHAPTER 1 : HISTORY

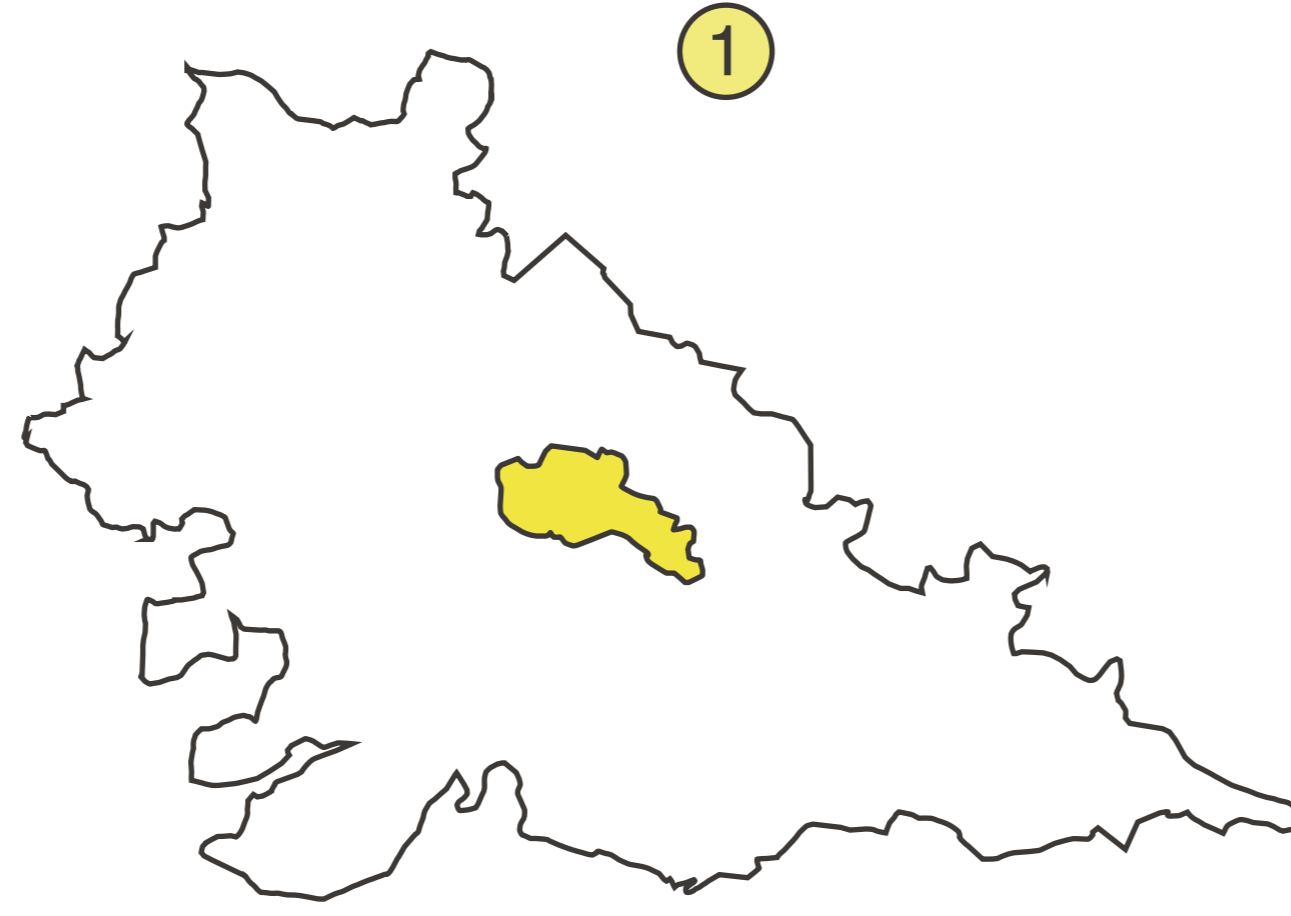
## MANTUA

Mantua or Mantova is a city and commune in Lombardy region, Italy, and capital of the province of the same name.

In 2016, Mantua became Italian Capital of Culture. In 2017, Mantua will also be European Capital of Gastronomy, included in the Eastern Lombardy District (together with the cities of Bergamo, Brescia, and Cremona).

In 2007, Mantua's centro storico (old town) and Sabbioneta were declared by UNESCO to be a World Heritage Site. Mantua's historic power and influence under the Gonzaga family has made it one of the main artistic, cultural, and especially musical hubs of Northern Italy and the country as a whole. Mantua is noted for its significant role in the history of opera; the city is also known for its architectural treasures and artifacts, elegant palaces, and the medieval and Renaissance cityscape.

Mantua is surrounded on three sides by artificial lakes, created during the 12th century, as the city's defense system. These lakes receive water from the Mincio River, a tributary of the Po River which descends from Lake Garda. The three lakes are called Lago Superiore, Lago di Mezzo, and Lago Inferiore ("Upper", "Middle", and "Lower" Lakes, respectively).



1

Map of the province of Mantua and highlight the Comuna of Mantua.

2

Map of the city of Mantua and highlight the Ducal Palace.

## HISTORY OF THE DUCAL PALACE

### A EUROPEAN COURT OF ANTIQUE ORIGIN

Palazzo Ducale develops between the ancient St. Peter's Square (the present Sordello square) and the shore of the Lower Lake. Originally composed of unbundled factory bodies, the Palace is organically formed in the first half of the 16th century, when it becomes a unique, grand architectural complex corresponding to the oldest city quarter. The Gonzaga family makes its residence from 1328 to 1707, when the last Duke Ferdinando Carlo, who is opposed to felony, is forced to exile. On April 2, 1707, the House of Austria claims the direct domain of the Duchy of Mantua and begins the governorate of the Habsburgs.

**FROM ORIGIN IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE 15TH CENTURY**  
The oldest buildings, overlooking Sordello Square, are the Captain's Palace and the Magna Domus, erected by the Bonacolsi family, dominating Mantua from 1273 to 1328. With the Gonzaga's power takeover, new factories are aggregated to the original nucleus: it forms Old Court. In a large 14th century environment, Pisanello frescoes for Gianfrancesco Gonzaga - on the occasion of his appointment as Marquis (1433) - the extraordinary knightly cycle recovered in the last century. Between 1395 and 1406, on the project of Bartolino da Novara, the Castle of San Giorgio was built, which, by the will of Ludovico II Gonzaga, became the residence of the marching family from the middle of the 15th century. In the northeast tower, Andrea Mantegna frescoes from 1465 to 1474 the famous Picta Room, or the Chamber of Spouses; on the noble floor are also the first Studiolo and the first Grotto of Isabella d'Este, consort of Francis II.

### FROM THE 15TH CENTURY AT THE MIDDLE OF THE XVI CENTURY

In the Old Court, from 1480, Domus Nova, modified by Duke Vincenzo I (1587-1612), dates back to 1480. Not far from the San Giorgio Castle, Giulio Romano edifices for Federico II the so-called New Court, whose first nucleus is the Troy Apartment (1536-1539). Giulio also has the idea of Rustica, then connected to the New Court by the Gallery of the Exhibition and the Months, while by Giovan Battista Bertani takes shape - after the middle of the century - the Courtyard of the Exhibition, which in the eighteenth century takes the name of Cavallerizza. At the death of Francis II (1519), Isabella d'Este moved from Castle to Old Court. The widow's apartment includes some magnificent rooms decorated by Lorenzo Leonbruno, including the magnificent "Camera granda" (also called Scalcheria), the Studiolo, the Grotto and the Secret Garden. In the Eighties of the sixteenth century, Duke Guglielmo (1550-1587), Isabella's nephew, commissioned Bernardino Faccioto's transformation of the Old Court environments: here is the Refectory, overlooking the Garden Garden, and the Mirror Room, destined for music, overlooking the Courtyard of the Eight Faces. On the rivulet of San Nicolò, Guglielmo builds the Great Apartment of Castello with its rooms dedicated to the Captains, the Marches and the Gonzaga Dukes, which are accessed by the majestic Hall of Manto. From 1563, Giovanni Battista Bertani edifices the palazzo church of Santa Barbara, still today the visitor of the palace, linked to both the Great Apartment of Castello and the runner of Santa Barbara.

### FROM THE MIDDLE OF THE XVI CENTURY TO THE MIDDLE OF XVII CENTURY

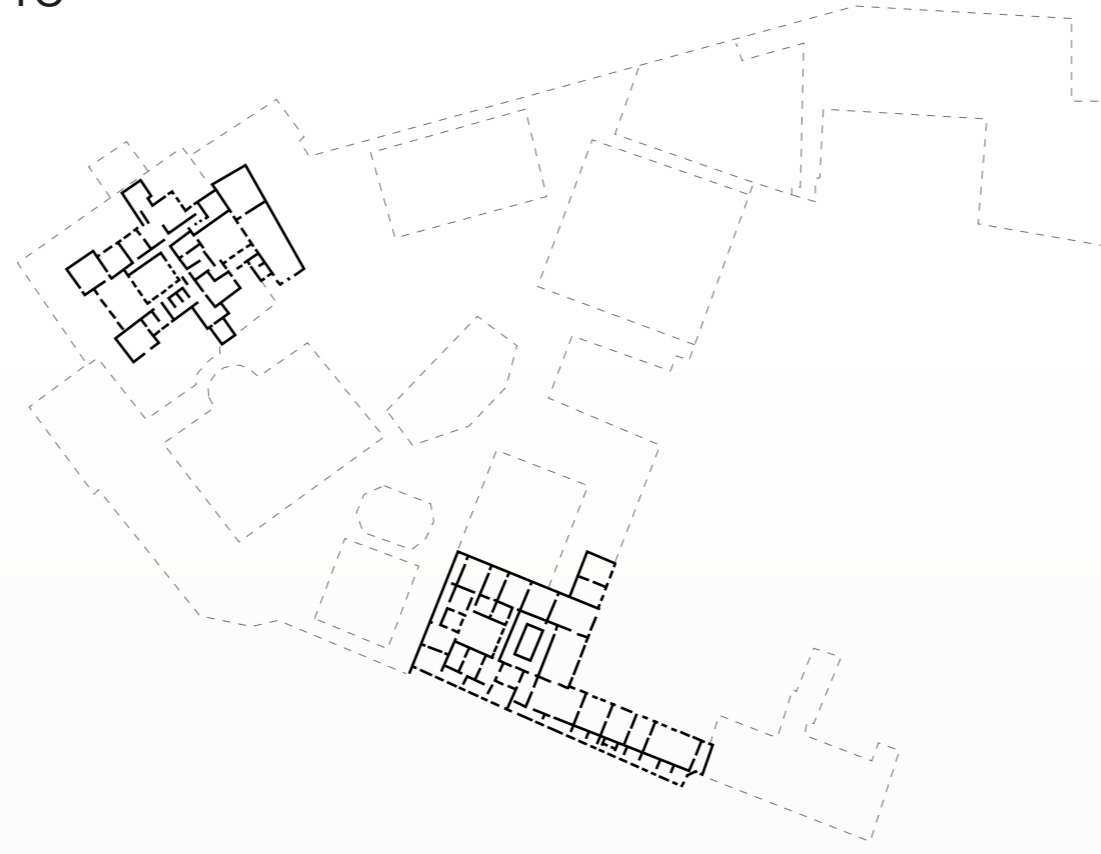
In the early 17th century, Duke Vincenzo I (1587-1612) commissioned the Cremona architect Antonio Maria Viani to transform a wing of the fifteenth-century and fancian Domus Nova - chosen as his own residence - with access from the archier's atrium. The loggia on the Courtyard of Honor, which is used as a shelter for the inestimable dual collection of paintings, is soon "tightened" and turned into a gallery (from the late eighteenth century, called "Galleria degli Specchi"). In Viani, the fourth Duke of Mantova commissioned the Gallery of Metamorphoses, where the collections of natural and artificial wonders are located. The rooms, dedicated to the four elements, overlook the garden already of the Pavilion, later called the Semplici, designed by the botanist friar Zenobio Bocchi for Vincenzo I himself in 1603. In the Domus Nova, Ferdinando Gonzaga (1613-1626) makes the Paradiso apartment - now the headquarters of the Museum Direction - and Scala Santa (1615), a miniature reproduction of the one preserved at San Giovanni in Laterano in Rome, by Giovanni Rodari as the Apartment of the Dwarf Court: a fake historical, made credible for a long time by the proportions of the environments. In 1627-1628, in order to cope with the economic difficulties of the duchy, the most precious pieces of the Gonzaga collections - long envied by all the courts of Europe - are sold by Vincenzo II to King of England Carlo I Stuart. In 1630, what remains of the wonderful works of art and artefacts preserved at Palazzo Ducale is plundered by the Lanzichenecci, sent by Emperor Ferdinand II to punish Carlo I Gonzaga Nevers, a rector of a philosophical policy.

### FROM THE MIDDLE OF XVII CENTURY TO THE DAYS OF OURS

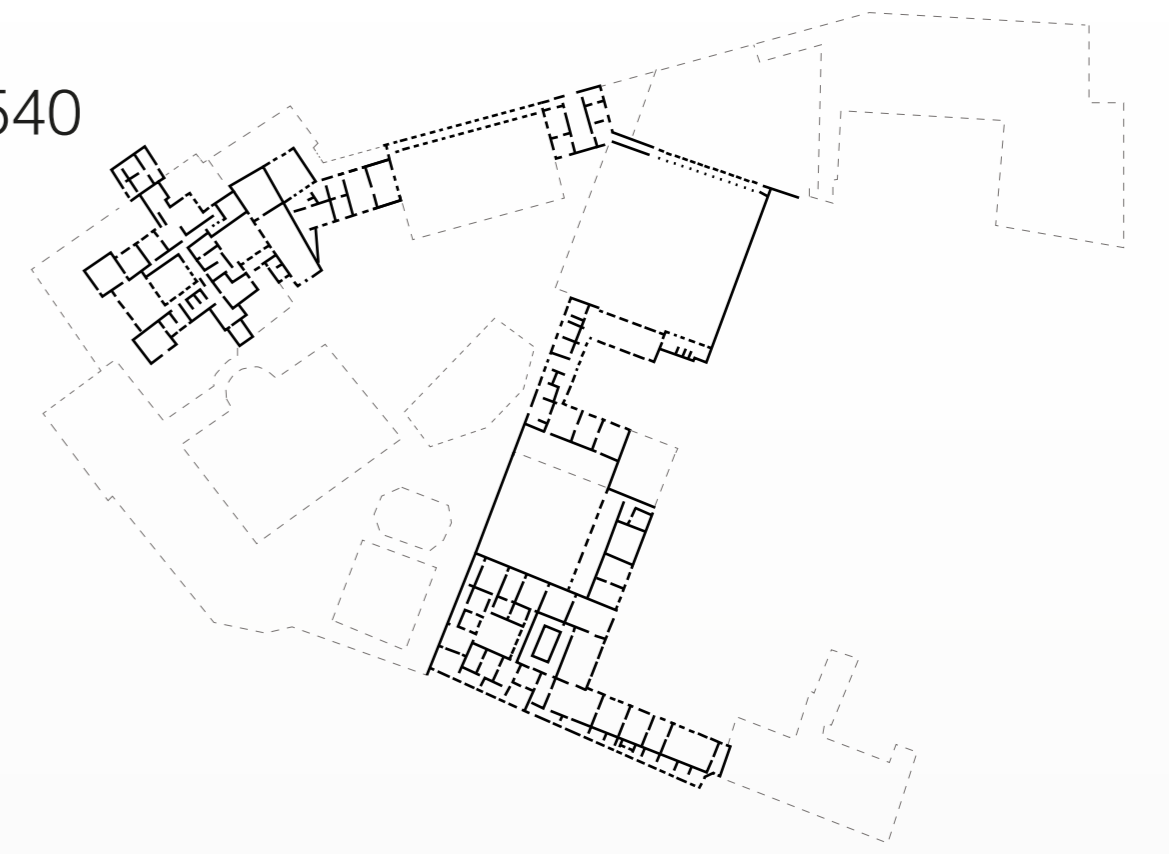
During the domination of the Gonzaga-Nevers some decorative devices were developed, particularly in the Old Court. Architectural interventions resumed towards the middle of the eighteenth century, during the first shades of the domination of the Habsburgs. From the seventies of the eighteenth century, the palace, intended for the residence and seat of the government, was restored and renovated: late Baroque style is the Rivers Room, neoclassical taste of the Apartment of the Tapestries and the Apartment of the Empress. Following the annexation of Mantua to the Kingdom of Italy (1866), the Palace became the subject of important restoration campaigns between the last years of the 19th century and the first four decades of the XX. These interventions have strongly influenced the present aspect of the Palatine complex; were given, for example, Gothic garments at the Castle of San Giorgio and the facade of the Captain's Palace. Following the seismic events of 2012, structural consolidation and seismic improvements were carried out, in particular the Castello di San Giorgio, the Sala di Manto, the Rustica in Corte Nuova, and further protection measures are underway and planned of the buildings that make up the vast complex.

## GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION OF THE PROJECT

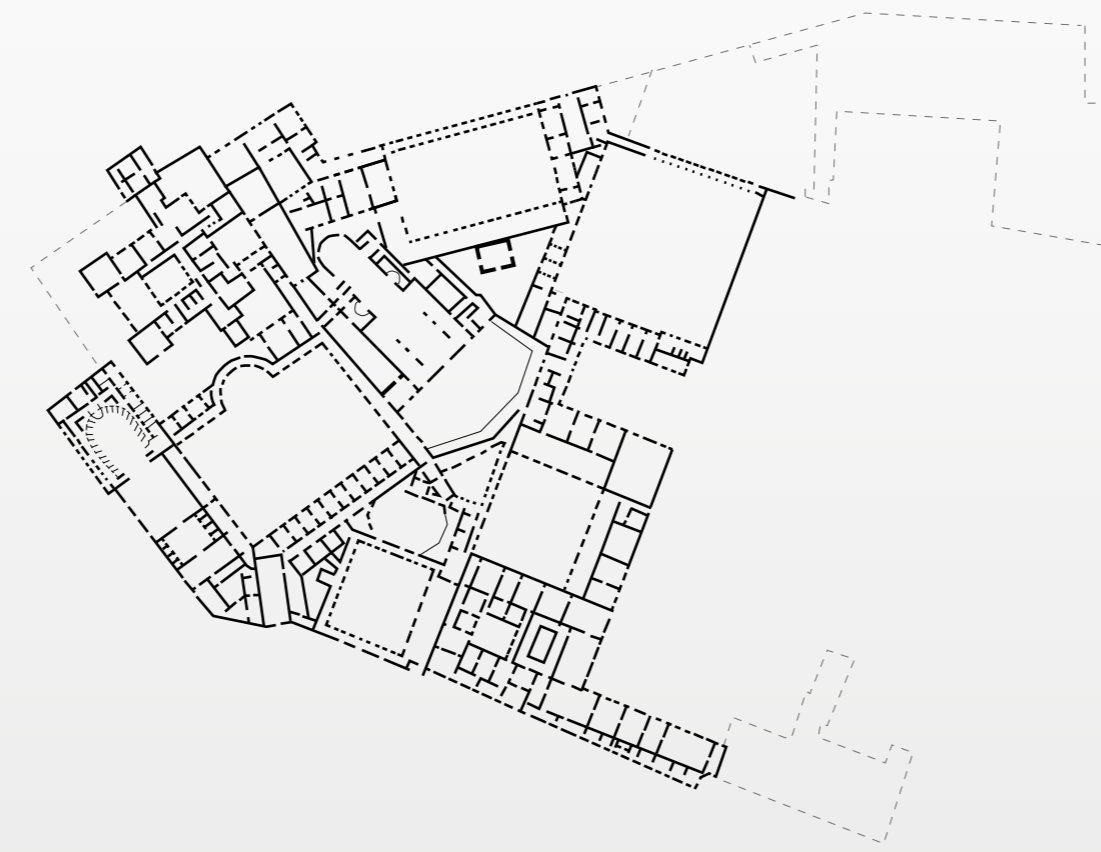
1440



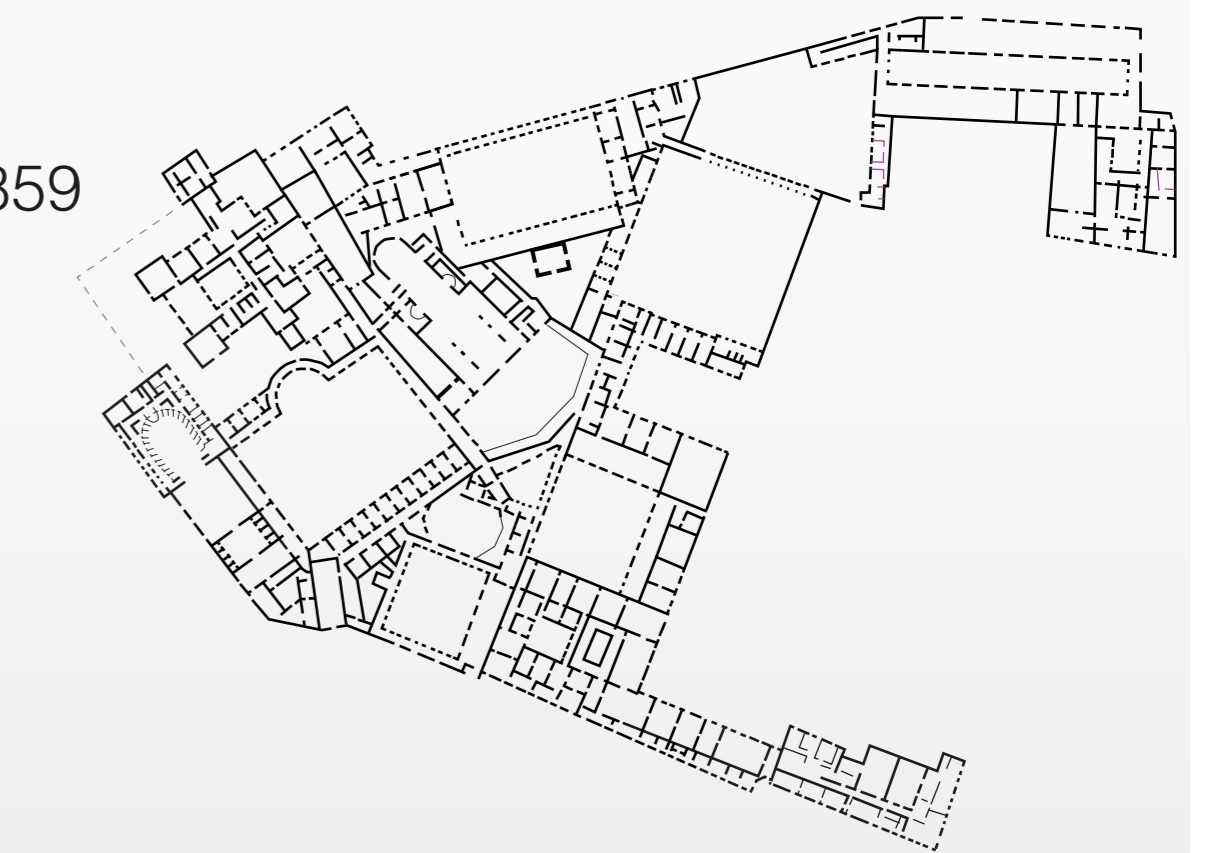
1540



1630



1859



## HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF THE PALACE

