

Gorani Tower

Between 1484 and 1485 the plague once again ravaged Milan. Leonardo da Vinci saw first-hand the terrible effects wrought by the disease on the people of the city. It may have been this calamitous event visited upon Milan that encouraged him to turn his mind to imagining and designing an ideal city, traces of which remain among the notes and sketches collected in the Codices.

In keeping with the desires for urban renewal expressed by Ludovico il Moro (Ludovico Maria Sforza), da Vinci envisioned an open city without any confining walls stifling its expansion; a city where animals and humans were kept in separate quarters, where each dwelling reflected the dignity of its owner. With almost one hundred thousand inhabitants in 1490, Milan was the most populous city in Europe, and hence faced serious sanitation and hygiene problems.

In the midst of a jumble of streets, canals, gardens, churches, monasteries and cottages, all overlooked by the Castle, itself a treasure trove of Renaissance works and marvels, stood the “noble houses,” some of which still included medieval towers, of the city’s aristocracy.

The Gorani Tower, which is one of the few to have survived to the present day, stands opposite another survivor, the Morigi Tower, both of them a stone’s throw from a third, the ancient Meravigli Tower on the street of the same name. Until 1943, the tower was part of Casa Gorani Bazzeri Mattei, a noble house that was destroyed by Second World War bombs that left standing only its baroque portal. Built in the 13th century on the ruins of the Imperial Palace, the tower is crowned by a set of elegant bifores and trifores, surmounted by a loggia.

One descendant of the family that built the tower was Count Giuseppe Gorani (1740-1819), a legendary adventurer, revolutionary and writer who frequented the courts of half of Europe, where he carried out delicate diplomatic missions and seduced high-ranking ladies.

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