



FONDAZIONE
INTERNAZIONALE
MENARINI

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THE UNIVERSITY OF MILAN

RED CELL BIOLOGY THIRTY YEARS AFTER

SEPTEMBER 24 - 26, 2015





A BRIEF HISTORY

The University of Milan, known as *la Statale* is a public teaching and research university acclaimed as one of the finest international academic institutions. It currently includes 8 faculties and 2 schools: Agricultural and Food Sciences, Pharmacy, Law, Letters and Philosophy, Medicine and Surgery, Veterinary Medicine, Sciences and Technology, Political-Economic and Social Sciences, Exercise and Sports Sciences, Linguistic and Cultural Mediation Sciences. It comprises 138 study programmes, both undergraduate and graduate, 31 doctoral schools and 76 specialisation schools.

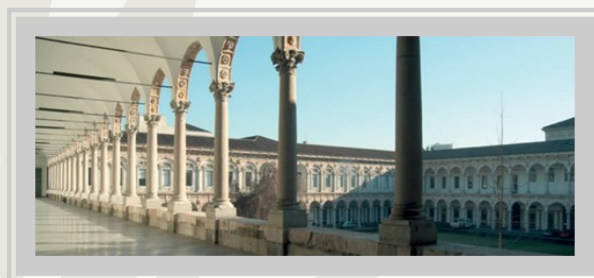
It is located in more than 200 buildings in 4 districts in the city and in 12 localities outside Milan and owns 137 libraries and study rooms. The teaching staff is composed of 2,000 tenured professors and researchers and approximately 500 adjunct professors. The students enrolled are approximately 64,000 making the institution at the fifth place behind Rome, Bologna, Naples and Palermo.

Milan's University came into being just over 90 years ago, on the Feast day of the Immaculate Conception, December 8, 1924 with the reform of the Italian educational system carried out by Giovanni Gentile, the minister of education during the Fascist government.

Before its foundation and since the 19th century, Milan already hosted some university level institutions as the Scientific-Literary Academy, active since 1859, and the Clinical Specialisation Institutes established in 1906 by the obstetric-gynaecologist Luigi Mangiagalli. With the reform, both combined into the faculties of the new University: the first into Humanities and the second into Medicine. Law, Sciences, Humanities and Medicine became then the first four faculties of the newly born University of Milan.



In the 1930s, the courses of Veterinary and Agriculture were added after the aggregation of the old schools of Veterinary Medicine born in 1808 and the school of Agricultural Studies established in 1871. In 1958 the graduate course in Foreign Languages and Literatures was founded, in 1970 the course in Political and Social Sciences and in 1999 the faculties in Pharmacology and Exercise and Sports Sciences. Over the years, student's numbers increased exponentially and in the 1990's a section of the University was split off into a second institution, the Bicocca University, to which Economy, Sociology and Psychology were transferred.

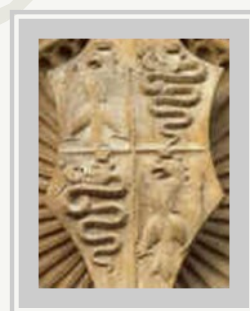


The first Chancellor of the University of Milan was Luigi Mangiagalli, Senator, Mayor of Milan and Director of the gynaecological and obstetrical clinic of the Specialisation Institutes. He strove a lot for years to find the financial resources necessary to set up this public and modern academic institution in the city.



Luigi Mangiagalli

Up until then, the single Lombard University centre was Pavia, officially established by Emperor Charles IV in 1361 as a *Studium Generale* on the request of Galeazzo II Visconti. Over the years, it was enlarged and renovated through the efforts of Gian Galeazzo Visconti, Duke of Milan.



Stemma dei Visconti



The first seat of the University of Milan was located in several buildings in the city centre: a palace in *corso di Porta Romana* housed the humanities faculties, the hospitals housed the medicine courses and the quarter of *Città Studi* (City of the Studies) the scientific disciplines. The *Città Studi* became in 1927 the University campus designed as cultural pole before the First World War. Today, it is still home to the five scientific faculties and several prominent hospitals of Milan.



Città studi nel 1930

The turning point happened in 1958 when the ancient seat of the *Ospedale Maggiore* (Main Hospital) in *via Festa del Perdono* was assigned to the University Rectorate, its administrative offices and the Law and Humanistic faculties. This was the *Magna Domus Hospitalis Mediolanensis*, an ancient imposing building, popularly nicknamed in dialect *Ca' Granda* (big house), place for the housing and care of the sick and poor of the Ducky of Milan.



Its construction was a decision of Francesco Sforza (1401-1466), when he became the first Sforza Duke of Milan on 25 March 1450, the day of Annunciation, after entering victorious the city having displaced the Ambrosian Republic (1447-1450). With his wife, Bianca Maria Visconti, he made a solemn vow to build an advanced hospital dedicated to the Madonna to provide free medical assistance for the poorest people of the city, to assist children in need and to take care of people suffering from acute diseases. In this large institution, he decided to



gather the many small hospitals built in various parts of the city since ancient times.

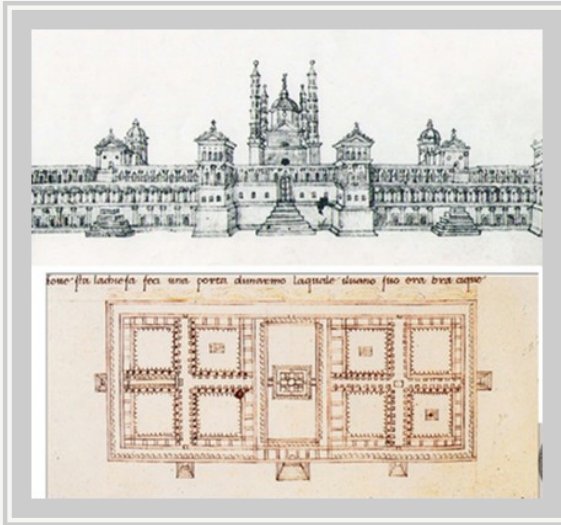
Its insignia was the Latin motto "Ave, Gratia plena" (hail, full of grace) with the picture of the dove of the Holy Spirit.

The monumental complex represents one of the most biggest, important and famous buildings of the Milanese Renaissance and covers an area of 43,000 square metres in the middle of the historic city centre, a stone's throw away from the Duomo and the famous opera house La Scala.

Giorgio Vasari in his book *Le Vite* admired and described the complex as "a building without equal through Europe".

The project was entrusted to the Florentine architect Antonio di Pietro Averlino (1400-1469), called Filarete (meaning "lover of virtue") who laid the first stone of this huge complex on April 12, 1456 after having executed the bronze central doors of the St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. He was summoned to Milan on the recommendation of the Lord of Florence, Cosimo I de' Medici. Choosing the Tuscan architect, also in charge of the reconstruction of the Castello Sforzesco and the Dome, Francesco Sforza intended to provide Milan with the most advanced construction techniques. At the time, Florence was considered the most pioneering city with the works of Brunelleschi and Alberti. Also the projects of the Florentine hospitals of Santa Maria Nuova and Degli Innocenti were used as models.



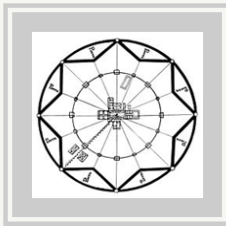


Filarete designed a large rectangular building, in Renaissance style, arranged around a series of inner courtyards separated by the *Cortile Maggiore* (great court) and in the form of a cross (called *crociera*) surrounded by a four-sided portico on two floors. Each wing of the cross was reserved for a specific disease, infective and non-infective, and separated for men and women. At the junction of the four arms of the cross stood the chapel to allow patients to participate in the daily celebration of the Eucharistic rite. In 1637 and thanks to the donation of the merchant Pietro Carcano, the three



architects G.B. Pessina F. M. Ricchini and F. Mangone built the actual church, dedicated to the Holy Annunziata, which still hosts on the altar the Annunciation of the painter Guercino of 1639.

With his project, Filarete introduced in Milan the *maniera antica* style, with the austere rationalism of Renaissance used by Brunelleschi and theorized by Alberti. However, he did not apply it rigorously and enriched it with many decorations.



From 1460 to 1464, he fully described the project of the Cà Granda in his *Treaty of Architecture*. A long treatise on architecture and urban planning written as a fictitious dialog between an artist and a prince were Filarete hypothesized a model city called *Sforzinda*.

He envisioned the Cà Granda as a structure capable of offering an environment both effective in preventing the spread of infectious diseases among the patients and also proactive toward their recovery. The structure was endowed with toilets called *destrì*, one every two beds, washbowls with current water to ensure hygiene, innovative room heating, ventilation and sewage systems to prevent the spread of infectious diseases among the patients. His project envisaged a multifunctional centre as a kind of small “city into the city” with a mill, a furnace for the bread, craft shops of barbers, shoemakers, carpenters.

The construction was carried out in various stages lasting over three centuries and only the south part of the building was realized according to Filarete’s design. He left Milan in 1464 and Guiniforte Solari with his pupil Giovanni Antonio Amadeo carried out the original project until the fall of the Sforza dynasty in 1499. They introduced significant changes to adapt the construction to the still Lombard late Gothic taste with typically terracotta decoration. In 1624, the work of enlargement continued under the direction of Giovanni Battista Pessina assisted by architects Francesco Maria Richini, Fabio Mangone and the painter Giovanni Battista Crespi, called the Cerano. They completed the left part of the wide façade and the main baroque courtyard, now known as *Courtyard of Richini*.

The long construction time results today in an amalgam of different styles with neoclassical and Baroque elements on top of the original Gothic and Renaissance architecture.

The entire project was economically supported by bequests and donations and the popular contribution especially paid during the jubilee called *Festa del Perdono* (Feast of the Forgiveness), celebrated on 25 March of each odd year with a generous distribution of indulgences. Papa Pio II, Enea Silvio Piccolomini, established this event in December 1459 with the Bull *Virgini gloriosae*.



The name of the Feast is still today the name of the street the façade of the ancient hospital, now University, opens onto. In the following centuries, in order to cover the cost of the hospital's maintenance, the hospital management came up with an original idea to receive additional funding: they hired artists who painted portraits of benefactors. The paintings were exhibited in the courtyards during the Feast of Forgiveness, so everyone could see the contributors and admire their generosity. These portraits are now collected in a famous picture gallery in the hospital and counts about 920 pieces from 1602 until today commissioned to famous painters as Hayez, Segantini, Carrà, Velàzquez and many more.



Nice to know is that also the *Sposalizio della Vergine* (Marriage of the Virgin), a painting of Raffaello, was a donation to the Ospedale Maggiore.

It is now hosted in the Brera Art Gallery in Milan.

Walking today along via Festa del Perdono, on the 282 meters long magnificent brick façade of Cà Granda we can admire the elegant sequence of Renaissance arches, the Gothic double lancet windows and the terracotta decorations. Entering the main baroque gate, we find the four small courtyards *della spezieria* (of the Apothecary's Workshop), *dei Bagni delle donne* (of the Ladies Bathroom), *della Giazzeria* (of the Icehouse) and *della Legnaia* (of the Woodshed), the ancient infirmary, now reading room on two floors, and the neo-classical Macchio wing, now home to the University offices.

The complex remained hospital until the II World War when it suffered heavy damages by the Allied bombings of 1943 and the patients had to be moved to structures outside the city. The building was then reconstructed and in 1958 changed his role to the actual headquarter of the University of Milan.



Fondazione Internazionale Menarini

Edificio L - Strada 6 Centro Direzionale Milanofiori 20089 Rozzano (MI)
Tel. +39 02 55308110 Fax +39 02 55305739 Email: milan@fondazione-menarini.it
www.fondazione-menarini.it - www.facebook.com/fondazionemenarini