

CHURCH AND CONVENT OF THE OSSERVANZA (OBSERVANT MINOR FRIARS)

The complex of the Observant Minor Friars was founded by Malatesta Novello under advice of his wife Violante, between 1459 and 1464. The project was given by Maso from Val Lugano, already architect of the bell tower of the Cathedral; in 1472 the church was consecrated. The area was surrounded by a wood, the remembrance of which is portrayed by the cell at the beginning of Viale Osservanza (of St. Onofrio, 1490 ca.) A wide restoration took place between 1763 and 1769 under Pietro Carlo Borboni, just before the complete reconstruction of the church (1791-94): in this case it was the Mantuan Leandro Marconi who gave the project, even if the works were followed by Benedetto Barbieri. Marconi himself decorated the interior (1794-1801), excluding the lateral chapels, by Venanzio Cavina (1842-45).

The external recalls the purest geometrical neoclassicism and is characterized by the incomplete facade. The portico has chapels which were once simple arcades; in the one on the left, a statue of *S. Francesco e Beato Ruffino* by Calligari (1763).

The interior presents one nave with three chapels on both sides. Interesting are the false caisson ceilings on the voltes and the false dome with *Padre Eterno che invia l'Arcangelo Gabriele alla Vergine*, by Marconi. The paintings belong mostly to the middle of the 1800's. Inside the convent is also preserved a wood statue representing the *Immacolata Concezione*.