

## FERRARA. CASTELLO ESTENSE – LETTURA DEL TEMPO, CONSERVAZIONE E DIVULGAZIONE NELLA CONTEMPORANEITÀ

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### Abstract.

The theme of this paper is the Estense Castle in Ferrara and has two perspectives, one historical, which summarizes how a historical building has, over time, changed form in relation to the designated uses it has had, and one focused on a description of more recent choices, which in continuity with the best results achieved by previous measures, has searched for and given practical effect to new uses that strengthen its central cultural role. Our project experience began in 2012 after the seismic events that hit Emilia Romagna and specifically the city of Ferrara. During the process undertaken, which involved the Provincia of Ferrara, the owner of the Castle, professional figures and institutions, events took place and opportunities arose that amplified the initial prospects pertaining to the building. In other words, improvement of the preservation of its existing state developed into an integrated enhancement project, involving also the intended use of a part of the monument. The Estense Castle, due to its impressive size and central position, is the most significant and representative monument in the city, as well as being, since its creation, an example of transformation and consequent reuse. Constructed as a specific defensive garrison in the XIII century, around 1385 it was developed into a walled fortress with four towers and a moat and then changed in 1476 to become a Court Palace for the Dukes of Este, beginning with Eleanor of Aragon, the wife of Hercules I. Following the death of the last of the Estensi, Alfonso II, in 1597 and the passing of the government of the city to the Papal legates, the Castle became the administrative headquarters for the territory from 1598 to 1861. Another change came about in 1874 when it was acquired through a public bid by the Provincial Delegation that used it as a representative and headquarter offices for local bodies and institutions. The Castle has in fact reached our era unchanged since the XVI century, in terms of final architecture and identity. Since 1980 local and state bodies and institutions, including the Provincia, have been working together on an important project of restructuring, restoration and valorisation of the monument. The desire to progressively reduce spaces destined to public offices in favour of a complete use of the Castle as a museum has also been affirmed now, through the intention to create a home for the National Gallery of Ferrara - Gallerie Estensi on the second floor. Today research and technology have allowed us to discover, explore and make choices about the preservation of the monument, adapting at the same time to modernity and creating the right environmental sustainability (security and comfort) and cultural conditions to make it worth visiting. Once again this location will play a central part in the life of the city, no longer as a seat of power, but rather as a home to and symbol of culture.

**Keywords:** *Estense Castle in Ferrara, transformation and consequent reuse.*