

Miramare Castle

The Castle of Miramare and its Park were built by order of Ferdinand Maximilian of Hapsburg (1832/ 1867), younger brother of Franz Joseph, Emperor of Austria. In 1850, at the age of eighteen, Maximilian came to Trieste with his brother Charles and, immediately afterwards, he set off on a short cruise toward the near East. This journey confirmed his intention to sail and to get to know the World. In 1852 he was appointed Officer and in 1854 he became Commander in Chief of the Imperial Navy. He decided to move to Trieste and to have a home built facing the sea and surrounded by a park worthy of his name and rank.

According to the tradition, when the Archduke was caught in a sudden storm in the Gulf, he took shelter in the little harbour of Grignano and he chose that bare rocky spur of limestone origin as the setting for his home. The whole complex, purchased for the first time at the beginning of March 1856, was called Miramar, after the name of Prince Ferdinand of Saxony's residence in Pena, Portugal.

Designed in 1856 by Carl Junker, an Austrian architect, the architectural structure of Miramare was finished in 1860. The style reflects the artistic interests of the Archduke, who was acquainted with the architectural style of Austria, Germany and England which was mainly eclectic. The craftsman Franz Hofmann and his son, Julius, were entrusted with the furnishing and decorations. Hofmann, who worked in the city of Trieste, was a skilful artisan who was willing to follow Maximilian's suggestions. Both the artisan and his patron had a similar cultural formation and they were well acquainted with



The Castle of Miramare

the eclectic tendencies of the time.

The work, steadily supervised by Maximilian, was finished only after his departure in 1864 for Mexico where he was appointed Emperor and where he was shot in Queretaro in June 1867.

Maximilian intended to create in the Castle an intimate atmosphere in the area reserved for his family – an area which he wanted to be in contact with nature and to reflect should convey his own spirit and that of an epoch.

On the ground floor, destined for the use of Maximilian and his wife, Charlotte of Belgium, worthy of note are the bedroom and the Archduke's office, which reproduce the cabin and the stern wardroom respectively of the frigate "Novara", the war-ship used by Maximilian when he was Commander of the Navy to circumnavigate the

world between 1857 and 1859; the library, whose walls are lined with bookshelves and the rooms of the Archduchess with their tapestry of light-blue silk.

On the first floor which was set aside for guests and where we can find the Throne Room, the magnificent panelling on the ceiling and walls, and the Chinese and Japanese drawing-rooms with their oriental furnishings stand out; of particular interest is the room decorated with paintings by Cesare Dell'acqua, portraying the history of Maximilian and Miramare.

Currently, the rooms in the Castle are mostly arranged according to the original layout decided upon by Maximilian and Charlotte.

A valuable photographic reportage commissioned by the Archduke himself made the reconstruction possible.

Nowadays to visit the Castle is to experience the fascination of life in the middle of the 19th century in a residence that has remained largely intact and which gives the visitor an insight into the personality of Maximilian.



*Charlotte, Yacht Phantasie
(1860)*