

VISIONARY CASTLE RESTORATION IN SALENTO, PUGLIA:

FROM FRESCOES TO CONTEMPORARY ART AND DESIGN
IN A GASTRONOMIC BOUTIQUE HOTEL



In the southern heart of Puglia, a visionary restoration project is almost complete, which will breathe new life into a once magnificent 17th-century castle.

After centuries towering over and protecting the little town of Ugento, evolving along the way from Norman fortress to glittering Baroque palazzo, Castello di Ugento had fallen into a crumbling state of decay.

Regeneration over the Ages

Now, a revolutionary renovation project is drawing to a close and the castle is preparing to take centre stage once more as it's converted into a contemporary art exhibition and event space, museum, luxury boutique hotel and state-of-the-art culinary institute. It will be a unique destination for the region: with more history seeping out of the stonework than the old maserie and more artistic riches than a traditional castle. It will be a vibrant

hive of cultural activity and a centre of learning and showcase for Puglia's rich gastronomy.

A startling discovery

As the delicate work has progressed, archaeologists, specialist restorers and art historians have peeled back layer upon layer of history. An archaeological dig has unearthed the remains of a second 13th-century Norman tower in the foundations along with a cache of Bronze Age artifacts. The castle's history, in fact, is now thought to date back to the Messapians in the 8th century BC.

A Palace for the 21st Century

Some of the most painstaking and delicate restoration work, however, was in the 17th-century Baroque apartments. Nicola and Francesco d'Amore transformed the military fort into a la-



vish palace in the late 1600s. The elegant salons on the first floor, the ceilings soaring into the star-shaped vaults typical of Salentine architecture, were decorated with a glorious mythological cycle of frescoes. A majestic staircase, meanwhile, or “Scalone” leads up to the grand first floor salons and is adorned with the d’Amore family coat of arms and intricate stuccowork.

During the project continues, the original splendour of the castle has been rediscovered. The ceiling and wall decorations are not only rare and incredibly well-preserved examples of

Baroque stuccowork and frescoes, but also provide a window onto the history of the d’Amore family through the iconography and mythological and literary allusions.

This is one of the most exciting renovation projects taking place in Italy and will catapult the castello back into the spotlight as it emerges from its cocoon into a vibrant cultural hub for the region. From frescoes to contemporary art installations, Castello di Ugento’s story spans over a thousand years of history. Now a new era is about to begin as its 21st century chapter is being written.



For more information...

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