

**Identification**

<i>Nomination</i>	Cologne Cathedral
<i>Location</i>	Land Nordrhein-Westfalen
<i>State Party</i>	Federal Republic of Germany
<i>Date</i>	18 August 1995

**Justification by State Party**

In the course of its five thousand years of history, European culture has produced a variety of types of building. Two are without doubt of the highest order: in antiquity it was the Greek temple and in the Middle Ages and modern times it was the Gothic cathedral, as developed in the 12th and 13th centuries in France. It developed relatively quickly out of the Romanesque basilica. Starting with the first manifestation at Chartres (begun 1194), the form of the cathedral resulted in commanding buildings at Reims (1212) and Amiens (1220). However, the highest expression of this architectonic form did not appear until Cologne (begin in 1248).

No other cathedral is so perfectly conceived, so uniformly and uncompromisingly executed in all its parts, and so fully completed. It marks the zenith of cathedral architecture and at the same time its culmination. Thereafter the line of development ceased and no further attempt at enhancement was ever made. This building therefore belongs without any doubt on the list of those monuments that represent the milestones in the cultural achievement of mankind.

**Note** The State Party does not make any proposals concerning the criteria under which the property should be inscribed on the World Heritage List in the nomination dossier.

**Category of property**

In terms of the categories of property set out in Article 1 of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, Cologne Cathedral is a *monument*.

**History and Description***History*

Christians met for worship in a private house in the north-east quarter of Roman Cologne near the city wall. Following the Edict of Milan in AD 313, when Constantine proclaimed religious freedom, this building was enlarged as a church. Alongside it were an atrium, a baptistery, and a dwelling-house, possibly for the bishop. This modest ensemble was extended and enlarged in the following centuries.

Credit for inspiring the construction of the first great Romanesque cathedral on the site is given to Archbishop Hildebold, a friend and advisor of Charlemagne. This immense building, known by the 13th century as "the mother and master of all churches in Germany," was consecrated by Archbishop Willibert in September 870. Post-World War II excavations, as well as contemporary documents, provide evidence of its form and decoration. It was a basilica, with a central nave flanked by two aisles, c. 95 m in length (two further flanking aisles were added in the mid 10th century, making it the first five-aisled church outside Rome) and with a large atrium in front of its western facade. A two-storeyed Chapel of the Palatinate, in the style of Charlemagne's chapel in Aachen, was added to the south transept at the beginning of the 11th century, and in the second half of that century it was connected by two lofty arcades at the east end with the Collegiate Church of St Mary *ad Gradus*.

Despite its generous dimensions, this cathedral was found to be too small to accommodate the throngs of pilgrims who visited it after the relics of the Magi were brought there from Milan in 1164 by Archbishop Reinald von Dassel. The ambition of Engelbert to make his archiepiscopal cathedral into one of the most important in the Holy Roman Empire led him to urge the construction of an entirely new building, but the start of the work was delayed by his murder in 1225, and it was not until 1248 that work began.

The original intention had been to demolish only the west transept of the existing building, so that the remainder could continue as an archiepiscopal church, but careless demolition led to the destruction of the entire building by fire, and so the way was clear for the creation of an entirely new building under the master-builder Gerhard. It would appear that he was familiar with the great French cathedrals, especially Amiens; however, it is unlikely that he had worked there, since he incorporated the artistic components of Amiens without the technical innovations that took place there. Gerhard died around 1260 and work continued under his assistant Arnold, who was in charge until 1299. Work continued steadily at the *chevet* (east end), where the painted windows were installed around 1310; the Cathedral Chapter was able to install itself there and consecrate the high altar in 1322, after 74 years of construction.

Meanwhile, work was under way on the western part of the cathedral, and continued under successive master-builders until 1560, when all work ceased on the instructions of the Chapter, for reasons that have never been satisfactorily explained. By this time much of the nave and the four side-aisles (continuing the plan of the Romanesque building) had been completed, along with the main structure of the lofty south tower of the west end. Despite numerous efforts, the Cathedral remained in an uncompleted state for the following centuries, although some additions were made to the furnishings and decoration. When the French seized Cologne in 1794 the Archbishop and Chapter moved to Aachen, and the building was used first for storage of grain and fodder and then as a parish church. However, interest rekindled and a movement for its completion got under way. Work was to begin again after Cologne passed to Prussia in 1815. Karl Friedrich Schinkel visited the Cathedral in 1816 and sent his talented pupil Ernst Friedrich Zwirner there as Cathedral Architect. Work did not begin, however, until 1840, financed jointly by the Prussian King Friedrich Wilhelm IV and an independent Society of Friends of the Cathedral (which raised enormous sums from a series of lotteries). By 1880 the building was complete, after 632 years and two months.

During World War II the Cathedral suffered tremendous damage during air-raids: no fewer than fourteen heavy bombs reduced it to a pitiful state. Restoration and reconstruction work rendered the *chevet* usable in time for the centenary celebrations in 1948, but the remainder of the building was not restored fully until 1956.

#### *Description*

Cologne Cathedral is a High Gothic five-aisled basilica (144.38 m long), with a projecting transept (86.25 m wide) and a two-tower facade (157.38 m high). The nave is 43.38 m high and the side-aisles 19.80 m.

The construction is totally unified. The western section, begun in 1330, changes in style, but this is not perceptible in the overall building. The 19th century work follows the medieval forms and techniques faithfully, as can be seen by comparing it with the original medieval plan on parchment.

The original liturgical appointments of the choir are still extant to a considerable degree. These include the high altar (on an enormous monolithic slab of black marble, believed to be the largest in any Christian church), the carved oak choir stalls of 1308-11, the painted choir screens of 1332-40, the fourteen statues on the pillars in the choir of 1270-1290, and the great cycle of stained-glass windows, the largest extant cycle of 14th century windows in Europe. There is also an outstanding series of tombs of twelve archbishops between 976 and 1612.

Of the many works of art in the Cathedral, special mention should be made of the Gero Crucifix of the late 10th century, in the Chapel of the Holy Sacrament, which was transferred from the Romanesque predecessor of the present Cathedral, and the Shrine of the Three Magi of 1180-1225, in the choir, which is the largest reliquary shrine in Europe. Other artistic masterpieces are the Altarpiece of St Clare (c. 1350-1400) in the north aisle, brought here in 1811 from the destroyed cloister church of the Franciscan nuns, the Altarpiece of the City Patrons by Stephan Lochner (c. 1445) in the Chapel of Our Lady, and the Altarpiece of St Agilophus (c. 1520) in the south transept.

### **Management and Protection**

#### *Legal status*

The Cathedral is afforded protection under the Body Corporate of Public Law.

#### *Management*

The Cathedral is the property of the Chapter of the Metropolitan, vested in the Provost of the Cathedral. The Ministry for Urban Development and Traffic of Land Nordrhein-Westfalen is consulted on matters relating to the overall management of the Cathedral.

The Cathedral Administration (*Dombauverwaltung*), a department of the Chapter of the Metropolitan, is responsible for overseeing all work in the Cathedral, which is in the direct charge of the Cathedral Architect (*Dombaumeister*), Prof.Dr.-Ing. Arnold Wolff.

### **Conservation and Authenticity**

#### *Conservation history*

Prior to its dissolution in 1794, the building had been continuously maintained by the Cathedral Workshop. The Workshop was reconstituted in 1823 and undertook restoration work after the severe deterioration of the preceding decades. It continued its work throughout the 19th century building operations, but was again dissolved in 1887, to be re-created once again in 1905. It was responsible for the post-World War II reconstruction work, which involved the rebuilding of twelve of the 22 high vaults. At the present time around one hundred people are employed by the Workshop for restoration and administrative duties. Each year some 14 million German marks are available for maintenance and restoration.

#### *Authenticity*

It is difficult to establish parameters for evaluating the authenticity of this building, which was constructed over more than six centuries and extensively rebuilt after grievous wartime damage. The essential factor is that all the work, from the 13th to the 19th century, was carried out with scrupulous respect for the original design, and that this tradition was continued in the post-World War II reconstruction. In this respect Cologne Cathedral may be considered with justification to be *sui generis* and hence its authenticity is absolute.

### **Evaluation**

#### *Action by ICOMOS*

An ICOMOS expert mission visited Cologne in February 1996.

#### *Qualities*

Cologne Cathedral is a masterpiece of human creativity and a superlative symbol of the endurance and steadfastness of Christian faith over seven centuries.

#### *Comparative analysis*

In his comparative study of Gothic cathedrals, carried out for ICOMOS in 1988, the distinguished Swiss expert Professor Peter Kurmann identified four Gothic cathedrals in France, four in Germany, four in England, two in Italy, and two in Spain as being priorities for inscription on the World Heritage List. Of these, four are already inscribed on the List (Bourges, Reims, Canterbury, Seville) and three (Strasbourg, Siena, Lübeck) are also there as part of historic towns inscribed on the List. Cologne Cathedral heads his list for Germany. Of it he writes that "... it is not only, after the cathedrals of Seville and Milan, the third largest Gothic cathedral in the world, it is also in its way the most perfect Gothic cathedral. Begun in 1248, it was built in several stages in a spirit of complete faithfulness to the initial plan. As a result it exhibits perfect homogeneity."

#### *ICOMOS observations*

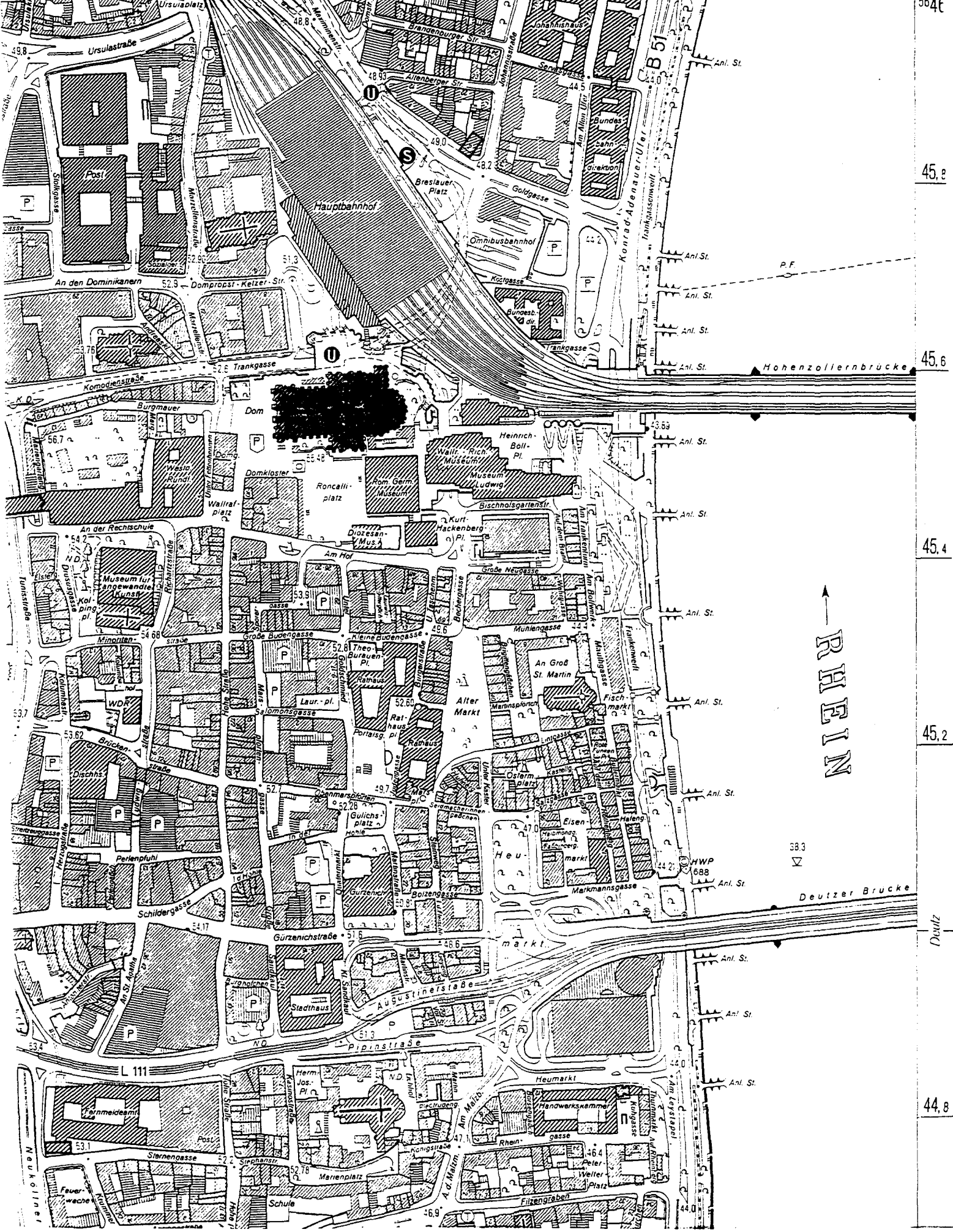
The nomination dossier gave no indication of any buffer zone around the Cathedral, nor of town planning regulations in the city of Cologne. In its report the ICOMOS expert mission made a specific proposal for a buffer zone. The State Party has accepted this proposal, and has also supplied information about planning protection.

### **Recommendation**

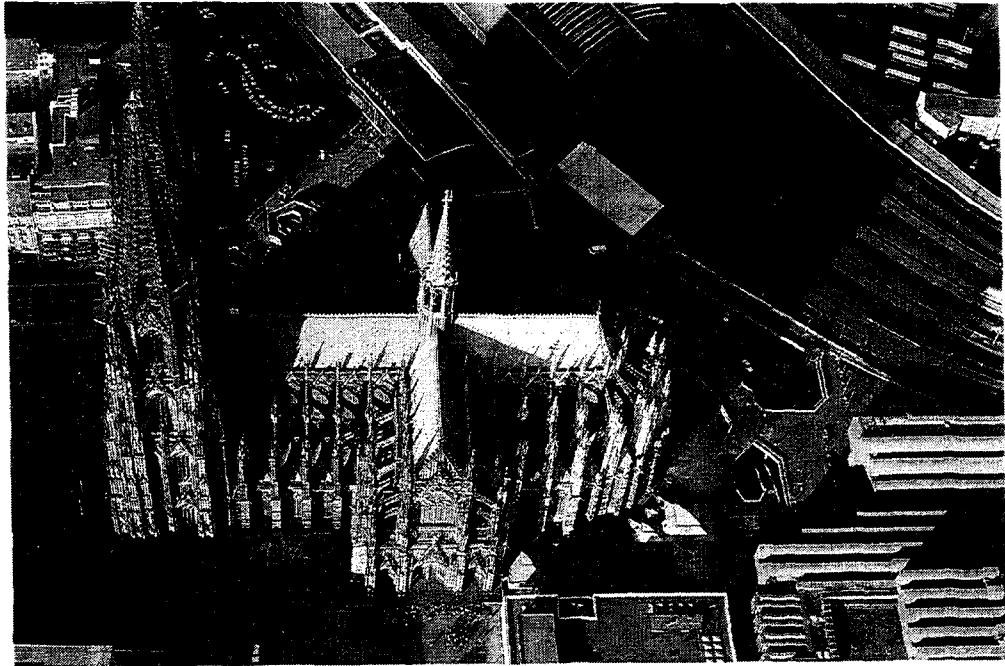
That this property be inscribed on the World Heritage List on the basis of *criteria i, ii, and iv*:

Cologne Cathedral is an outstanding work of human creative genius, constructed over more than six centuries and powerful testimony to the strength and persistence of Christian belief in medieval and modern Europe.

ICOMOS, October 1996



Cologne : plan de localisation de la cathédrale  
Cologne : location map of the Cathedral



Cologne : vue aérienne de la cathédrale, côté sud  
Cologne : aerial view of the Cathedral, from the south