



GIARDINO DEGLI DEI

The garden of the gods.
The paradigm of antiquity in the arts at the Villa
Tivoli, Villa d'Este, 21-22 aprile 2022

DEADLINE: 30 SEPTEMBER 2021

Organised by
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International interdisciplinary conference
Autonomous Institute of Villa Adriana and Villa d'Este,
Ministry of Culture

in collaboration with
École Nationale Supérieure de Paysage de Versailles
(ENSP)

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The establishment of humanistic culture in Italy led to one of the richest seasons in Villa architecture and a profound process of transformation of the idea and the function of the garden, in which antiquity was the absolute protagonist. The roots of this development date back to the second half of the fifteenth century, as is clearly demonstrated by Leon Battista Alberti, in the preface to his *De re aedificatoria*: “Our Ancestors have left us many and various Arts tending to the Pleasure and Conveniency of Life”.

Thus, a long and fruitful relationship began between the *jardin d'agrément*, or flower garden, and the ancient garden that developed naturally in Rome, thanks to the closeness of places of power and to the rich archaeological patrimony used as a source of works to be used or imitated.

A fundamental step in creating the relationship between the architectural organism and antiquity was the building of the Belvedere complex. Noble residences were soon added alongside it, with green spaces that were increasingly large and open towards the surrounding landscape.

The garden satisfied the need for a close relationship with classical culture, becoming the place dedicated to reflection, prayer, leisure, study, political activities and to entertaining guests, both for learned humanists and for men of the curia, better still if in properties located in direct contact with the ancient ruins.

The ancient theme began to permeate the most important designs in 16th century villas, well beyond the area of Rome: Bramante, Raffaello, Antonio da Sangallo, Giulio Romano, Vasari, Niccolò Tribolo, Andrea Palladio and Pirro Ligorio were inspired by the most famous residences of the imperial era, in the creation of complexes that took on a precise architectural form and a structured design, also by virtue of the inclusion of classical works. A particular type of garden, which emerged between the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, is that of the small gardens in which the setting was a blend of classical art and nature, places intended for intellectual encounters, where the taste for idealised scenarios lingered and where the architecture, sculptural context, nymphaea and vegetation were intertwined in less rigid forms.

In the sixteenth century, compared to the previous century, there was an increasingly important presence of settings with water features combined with the ancient element and inserted into iconographic paths entwined with literary references from classical tradition; water helped to develop contents and meanings that kept the building's iconographic programme going. Admirable examples are the Villa Lante in Bagnaia and Villa d'Este in Tivoli, the latter of which is closely linked to the nearby Villa Adriana, both due to the abundance of materials from the ancient residence and also to the celebratory intent of the cardinalial pomp of the family, the ideal descendant of the empire.

It is no coincidence that Villa d'Este will be the setting for the conference, which aims to intensify the relationship between the Villa's garden and the classical legacy. A multidisciplinary approach will be used, allowing an all-round investigation and integrating and placing the history of its art, the history of the gardens, architecture and archaeology and the history of its restoration and botany alongside each other.

Although focused on the garden of the Renaissance villa, the conference may also include contributions concerning other time periods, useful for visualising the theme in a broader perspective. Many residential complexes dating back to the Roman period featured decorative and architectural elements from more remote eras, as can be seen from literary sources and from archaeological evidence: copies or original Greek works of art were beautifully displayed in the patrician houses, in the *horti*, in the villas and in the imperial palaces.

On the other hand, if we consider the period following the Renaissance, the link between ancient elements and the gardens that were developed between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries still appears very strong, albeit with distinct functions. In the Baroque garden, the sculptural element represents the fulcrum of a well-defined and ordered visual axis, as is well demonstrated in French aristocratic residences and castles, while in the English landscape garden, the statues become surprising elements of a layout based on a picturesque choice and on a taste for the exotic, very different from the layout of the Italian garden and prodromal to the development of the nineteenth-century romantic garden.



The long relationship between the garden of the gods and the classical legacy reaches the present day, with expressions that go far beyond the influence of the ancient world welcomed by sixteenth-century architects. An example of this is Paul Getty's residence in Malibù, a celebration of the Villa dei Papiri in Herculaneum and now home to a very rich collection of ancient art. Another example is the garden of Little Sparta in Scotland, where, starting in the mid-1960s, Ian Hamilton Finlay and Sue Finlay have skilfully combined references to antiquity and the compositional principles of the English picturesque garden with an *avant-garde* landscape design.

Thematic itineraries proposed:

SESSION 1

ANTIQUITY IN THE ROMAN AND MEDIEVAL GARDEN

- Greek originals and copies in the Roman pleasure garden
- Archaizing taste in architecture and garden painting
- References to the classic legacy of the medieval garden

SESSION 2

ANTIQUITY IN THE HUMANISTIC-RENAISSANCE GARDEN

- Continuity with antiquity: examples of use of the same sites for villa residences
- The garden with a setting of classical art and nature
- Antiquity and sixteenth-century architectural models
- The garden of the Villa and references to classic literary tradition
- Old-fashioned architectural vegetation: pergolas and topiary

SESSION 3

ANTIQUITY IN THE GARDEN FROM THE BAROQUE PERIOD TO THE CONTEMPORARY AGE

- From the baroque garden to the landscape garden: antiquity and its various interpretations
- Antiquity and the eclectic taste of the Villa garden between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries
- The *revival* garden: reinterpretations of antiquity in the Villa garden in the contemporary age

When selecting the articles, cross-cutting approaches aimed at uses and functions of the garden as a place for banquets and for the exhibition of power and the representation of antiquity in the garden of the Villa in modern and contemporary arts will be taken into account.

3

INFO:

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For the articles selected, each speaker will have a maximum of 20 minutes. Participation as a speaker at the conference is free of charge. We plan to publish the documents. Articles in Italian and in English will be accepted.

An abstract of max 500 words and a short CV of max 300 words, both in Italian or English, must be sent to va-ve@beniculturali.it; viviana.carbonara@beniculturali.it; davide.bertolini@beniculturali.it.

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DEADLINE FOR PROPOSALS:
30 September 2021

NOTIFICATION OF ACCEPTANCE:
31 October 2021

FINAL PROGRAMME AND DELIVERY OF A SHORT CONTENT FOR PRELIMINARY PUBLICATION:
30 November 2021

DEADLINE FOR PRESENTATION OF TEXTS FOR THE CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS:
30 November 2022

PUBLICATION:
by April 2023

IN COLLABORAZIONE CON

