

Nele Nutt

THE RENAISSANCE GARDEN AND ITS CONTRADICTIONS

INTRODUCTION

There was no ordinary or great citizen who had not built or was not in the process of building in the country a grand and rich estate with an expensive layout and handsome buildings, and much better than in town. And in this all were guilty and because of the unreasonable cost they were thought to be mad. And it was such a magnificent show that most foreigners not familiar with Florence, coming from outside, believe that these rich buildings and beautiful palaces in a three-mile band outside the city made a city in the style of (ancient) Rome.¹

Giovanni Villani, 1346

That is Giovanni Villani's description of the environs of Florence in *Nuova Cronica* in 1346. The early country houses belonging to the Medici (Villa del Trebbio, Villa di Cafaggiolo, Villa di Careggi) were fortress-like buildings squeezed between tall, protective walls and divorced from the surrounding landscape, and as such they belonged in the Middle Ages rather than the Renaissance. "A crucial difference between the Rocca, or fortified castle, and the villa was that the former was the seat of the proprietor's political and economic power and the responsibilities and cares of power, or management, in the city."² The latter was meant for withdrawal from responsibilities.

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1 Giovanni Villani (1276 or 1280–1348), *Nuova Cronica* (1346).

2 James S. Ackerman, *The villa. Form and Ideology of Country Houses* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1990), 63.



FIG. 1. SANTA TRINITÀ. FRESCO BY MASACCIO ON THE WALL OF SANTA MARIA NOVELLA AS IT APPEARS TO A VIEWER IN FRONT OF IT. MASACCIO USED PERSPECTIVE INSIDE THE PICTURE BUT NOT IN THE FRAMING OF THE PICTURE. PHOTO: NELE NUTT, 2017.

The infinity constructed in accordance with the rules of perspective becomes visible in 1428 on the wall of Basilica of Santa Maria Novella, when Masaccio completes his fresco *Santa Trinità*. In 1435, Leon Battista Alberti writes down the rules of painting. Into his treatise *De pictura*, Alberti assembles aesthetical principles, rules of proportion and central perspective, which form the basis for the creation of a geometrical space. The three-part treatise (*De pictura*, *De re aedificatoria*, *De statue*) contains, in addition to painting, also theories on sculpture and architecture. The first part of *De re aedificatoria* was written between 1443 and 1445, and the second between 1447 and 1452.³ In 1451, Cosimo de Medici starts building a villa in the mountain slopes of Fiesole in the vicinity of Florence. Leon Battista Alberti “considered Giovanni his ‘very great friend in Florence’ /.../ the two knew each other, given also the well-known friendship between Alberti and the Medici family, indicate that they frequented each other: ‘I shall be, I believe, with you within not many days’; exactly in the years in which the villa was being built and the writing of the treatise on architecture could be considered finished.”⁴

The new view of the world is manifested for the first time in the architecture of the Medici villa built in Fiesole. It is not simply a closed building with its interiors, but it is joined by a small garden which allows for the interiors’ smooth transition into the exterior.

By opening itself thus to the outside, the villa enters into a dialogue with the garden, thereby forming an integral ensemble. The views from the garden connect the villa with the mountains in the distance and the sky stretching overhead. This new open space concept will inspire the garden and villa designers of the next centuries.

In many ways, the Renaissance garden is an illusion, like a painting, where perspective is used to create the illusion of depth on the canvas. The application of the skill of capturing and placing a three-dimensional space on a flat surface creates an impression of the defeat of infinity. New knowledge expands the understanding and perception of the world. The triumph of natural sciences places humans in a new position and creates a notion that nature can be designed according to human will. This also in garden design, where instead of letting nature develop

³ *Villa Medici a Fiesole. Leon Battista Alberti and the Prototype of the Renaissance Villa*, ed. by Donata Mazzini (Firenze: Centro Di, 2004), 175.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 169.

freely, it is forced into frames controlled by humans and subjected to comprehensible rules of geometry. This contradictory combination of free nature and strict geometry constitutes the principle essence of the Renaissance garden, which will become the main axis of garden design for many centuries to come.

In the Renaissance garden where closedness and openness meet, the closed (walled-in) space is filled with simple geometrical images characteristic of the Renaissance. Views stretching out to the horizon are added to this strictly geometrical space, which seem to balance the restraint of the enclosed space and speak of desire for something else. For something that requires more than knowledge of the rules of geometry or mathematics, something that echoes back in the poetry of Petrarch, when he ascends Mont Ventoux with his brother simply to enjoy the views from there.

*In un boschetto novo, i rami santi
fiorian d'un lauro giovenetto et schietto,
ch'un delli arbor' pareo di paradiso;
et di sua ombra uscian sí dolci canti
di vari augelli, et tant'altro diletto,
che dal mondo m'avean tutto diviso;
et mirandol io fiso,
cangiossi 'l cielo intorno, et tinto in vista,
folgorando ,l percosse, et da radice
quella pianta felice
súbito svelse: onde mia vita è trista,
ché simile ombra mai non si racquista.*⁵

The paradigm shift occurs in literature, art, architecture, as well as in park architecture. While in literature it manifests in the love poetry of Petrarch, and Boccaccio's odes to earthly love, and naturalism gains

5 Petrarcha, *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta. Canzoniere CCCXXIII*. Translated by Anthony S. Kline.

In a fresh grove, the sacred branches
of a laurel flowered, young and slender,
it seemed a tree of paradise:
and such sweet singing of varied birds
issued from its shade, such noble joy,
that I was lifted above this world:
and gazing intently,
the sky altered all round, and darkened,
lightning struck, and suddenly
that happy plant
was torn up by its roots: so my life is saddened,
since I cannot ask for such another shade.

importance in art, park architecture together with architecture moves in the opposite direction, in a way. Architecture makes nature its servant and locations for villas are chosen as "Places from where the city, the owner's lands, the sea or a large plain and familiar hills and mountains may be viewed".⁶ However, a building constructed in such a place according to Alberti's advice is not blended into the environment but emphasized among its surroundings. The white cubical villas with magnificent views are visible from a distance themselves. "It is easily visible in all its beauty, inspiring delight and attraction in those who head towards it."⁷ To stand out, architecture contrasts itself to the natural landscape. Similarly to architecture, park design also yearns to satisfy its ambitions by contrasting with nature. The small gardens of the Medici villas depicted on the lunettes of Giusto Utens,⁸ have a simple geometrical design. The design of Renaissance flower beds does not use curved lines, whose beauty William Hogarth many centuries later highlights, calling straight lines and lines crossing at right angles lifeless.⁹ "The precondition for the Renaissance school of perspective and for plans of the ideal city, is order and geometry that helps man to create his own world, to give an idea a form and signify man-made things."¹⁰ The design of the garden surrounding the Renaissance villa is governed by straight lines and simple imagery. Nonetheless, the Renaissance park design, nor architecture, is not satisfied with simple geometry but yearns simultaneously for the freedom that infinitely fills the natural landscape. When on the one hand the garden is a closed area built according to strict rules, then views that open out over the surrounding landscapes are not restrained by rules. The immediate surrounds of the villa are designed according to the Renaissance order, which is comprehensible, inclusive and seeming to guarantee security, while the spirit, listening to Petrarch's poetry, yearns for freedom. The garden's infinity is the illusion of garden design. The Renaissance garden does not end at the wall surrounding the villa but it stretches to the horizon where the blueish green mountains and grey-blue sky become one. This free and wild nature thereby becomes a part of the

6 Leon Battista Alberti, *De re aedificatoria*.

7 *Villa Medici a Fiesole. Leon Battista Alberti and the Prototype of the Renaissance Villa*, 170.

8 Daniela Mignani, *The Medicean Villas by Giusto Utens* (Florence: Arnaud, 2004).

9 William Hogarth, *The Analysis of Beauty* (London: J. Reeves, 1753).

10 Juhan Maiste, "This City and Another", *Baltic Journal of Art History*, 5 (2013), 34.

garden without violating the safety of the people inside it. When *Dolce stil nuovo* combines the earlier love poetry tradition with philosophy, and Dante places sensual desire above pure spiritual feeling and virtue that not only ennobles humans but elevates them to divine love and bliss, garden design does the same, in its own way. Early Renaissance gardens create an atmosphere suitable for an animated emotional world and are in their sensibility more like the poetry of Dante or Petrarch than the novel of Boccaccio. “Petrarch, being a humanist first”,¹¹ “he does not define the rural life as one of leisure: on the one hand, it is devoted to the development of *humanitas*, the most arduous of all tasks since it involves both intense study and dominion over the unruly spirit...”¹² “Come to us, Marsilio, as soon as possible. Bring with you our Plato’s *De summo bono*...”¹³ Cosimo writes to Ficino when he arrives in his villa in order to dedicate himself to brainwork.

“Next to the visible part of art, which can be expressed by visual grammar, an important role is played by the invisible: everything that is inside, above or behind the picture that makes the picture a work of art.”¹⁴ The Renaissance garden of the Quattrocento requires a considerably more sensitive mind than the Renaissance park of the Cinquecento, which is built on strong emotions. “I came to the villa at Careggi not to cultivate my field but my soul,”¹⁵ writes Cosimo de Medici “and thanks to the metaphysical message within, it intrigues one to find ever new modes and means of expression for describing works of art”.¹⁶ Treatment of the Renaissance gardens of the Cinquecento requires more than just the analytical approach, which permits objective measurement and recording of the world with the help of mathematical science rediscovered at the Platonic Academy. “The Medici gardens in Castello and Boboli declared their messages in carefully planned iconographical programmes that were supposed to arouse certain reactions in visitors. In Castello, fountains and statues extolled the rise of the Medici and the importance of

11 Werner Söderhjelm, *Itaalia renessanss*. Elav teadus, 22, transl. by Friedebert Tuglas (Tartu: Eesti Kirjanduse Selts, 1933), 51.

12 Ackerman, *The villa. Form and Ideology of Country Houses*, 64.

13 Ibid., 73.

14 Juhan Maiste, “Miks kõneleb Lakoon kirjasõnas ja ei kõnele marmoris?”, *Baltic Journal of Art History*, 11 (2016), 12.

15 Ackerman, *The villa. Form and Ideology of Country Houses*, 73.

16 Maiste, “Miks kõneleb Lakoon kirjasõnas ja ei kõnele marmoris?”, 12.



FIG. 2A. GEOMETRICAL BEDS OF THE EARLY BOBOLI GARDEN. COMPOSED BY NELE NUTT BASED ON A LUNETTE BY UTENS.

Florence.”¹⁷ The Renaissance garden is an iconological composition where antiquity and the Renaissance meet. Good and evil, justice and injustice meet in the group of sculptures of the fountain at the centre of the garden of Villa Castello. The sculpture, created by Bartolomeo Ammannati (1511–1592) in 1559–1560, depicts a moment when Heracles, having realized that Antaeus gets his power from the earth, has lifted Antaeus off the ground and Antaeus’s spirit is leaving his body in the shape of a waterfall of over 3 metres in height. The fountain sculpture tells a story of wisdom’s victory over strength and simultaneously symbolises the justice and wisdom of

17 Penelope Hobhouse, *The Story of Gardening* (2022), 128.



FIG. 2B. BED PATTERNS OF THE GARDEN IN FIESOLE. COMPOSED BY NELE NUTT BASED ON JOHN CHIENE SHEPHERD, GEOFFREY ALAN JELlicOE, *ITALIAN GARDENS OF THE RENAISSANCE* (LONDON: BENN, 1925).



FIG. 2C. BED PATTERNS. COMPOSED BY NELE NUTT BASED ON SEBASTIANO SERLIO, *TUTTE L'OPERE D'ARCHITETTURA, ET PROSPETTIVA* (1537).

the Medici government. In later gardens it is common that ancient mythology is used to convey the messages, because without it the Renaissance would not be able to speak. While the design of the Early Renaissance garden supports the vivacity of inner feelings, the powerful formal language of later gardens grabs all attention, arousing strong emotions that suffocate the inner world.

QUATTROCENTO. VILLA MEDICI IN FIESOLE

Fiesole is the earlier of the Medici villas where the views link the landscape with the immediate surrounds of the building. Its architecture reflects the new world view, its design is based on new foundations, it is no longer a closed fortress like the earlier villas: Villa del Trebbio (1427), Villa di Cafaggiolo (1434), or Villa di Careggi (1434). The villa is one of the first structures to include the dictates of the new classicizing architecture.¹⁸ This is an entirely new approach that will become an example for the following centuries.

The villa in Fiesole (1451–1457) that belonged to the Medici was commissioned by one of the pillars of the family, Cosimo de Medici (1389–1464). After Cosimo's death in 1464, his 15-year-old grandson Lorenzo de Medici Il Magnifico (1449–1492), whose reign is considered the cultural and economic apex of Renaissance Florence, becomes the owner of the villa. Lorenzo, who plays an important part in the acquisition of the innovative villas and gardens, is a patron of both arts and science, and himself a talented and versatile poet. "Florenzo has acquired a special fame by recognising the Platonic philosophy as the most beautiful flower of the antiquity, filling his surrounds with that recognition and thereby initiating the second and highest rebirth of antiquity within the bounds of humanism. /---/ The company of scholars who gathered around the famous Lorenzo differed from similar associations by that higher, unifying thread of the idealistic philosophy. Only in such an environment could Pico della Mirandola feel happy."¹⁹ In addition to Pico della Mirandola (1463–1494), Lorenzo's circle who visited Fiesole included his contemporary poets, artists, philosophers like Poliziano (1454–1494), Luigi Pulci (1432–1484), Sandro Botticelli (1445–1510), Giuliano da Sangallo, and

18 *Villa Medici a Fiesole. Leon Battista Alberti and the Prototype of the Renaissance Villa*, 172.

19 Jacob Burckhardt, *Italia renessansikultuur: üks esituskatse* (Tartu: Ilmamaa, 2003), 185.



FIG. 3. THE GARDEN SEEMS TO HANG ABOVE THE CITY OF FLORENCE. PHOTO: NELE NUTT, 2023.

Leon Battista Alberti (1404–1472), who, during the construction of the villa, was working on a four-part treatise on architecture *De re aedificatoria* (1443–1452, published in 1485), in which, following the example of Vitruvius (*De architectura libri decem*), he listed the golden rule of architecture, which is based on three pillars – *firmitas-utilitas-venustas*. A magnificent place has been chosen as the location of the Medici villa in Fiesole, just as suggested by Alberti in his treatise. A place from where it is possible to observe the city of Florence in the valley and the mountains towering in the distance. Giotto’s (c1267–1337) Campanile (1334–1359) of the Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore rises on the shores of the Arno River in the valley, and the sound of the bells announcing the beginning of mass reverberates on the surrounding mountains. The dome (1420–1436) of the recently finished cathedral thrones above the silhouette of Florence. This ambitious engineering marvel by Filippo Brunelleschi (1377–1446) relies on the tradition of Roman architecture, using classical architectural forms to create harmony and beauty; however, never before had



FIG. 4. VIEW OVER THE TERRACES AND THE CITY OF FLORENCE IN THE VALLEY. PHOTO: NELE NUTT, 2023.

anyone been able to bridge pillars that are so far from one another like Brunelleschi’s ingenious construction allowed.

“When you are made uncomfortable by the heat of the season in your retreat at Careggi, you will perhaps think the shelter of Fiesole not undeserving of your notice”,²⁰ Agnolo Poliziano wrote to Marsilio Ficino in 1488. “Seated between the sloping sides of the mount, here we have water in abundance and, being constantly refreshed with moderate winds, find little inconvenience from the glare of the sun. As you approach the house it seems surrounded by trees, but when you reach it, you find it commands a full prospect of the city.”²¹ The garden surrounding the villa is set upon three terraces descending towards the valley, with views over the dome of the Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore that towers above the city. “And this small villa is surrounded by a smallish wood which does not block the view of Florence”,²² Marsilio Ficino writes to Poliziano from Fiesole. It is hard to imagine a more suitable location that would place a Renaissance

20 Ackerman, *The villa. Form and Ideology of Country Houses*, 76.

21 Ibid.

22 *Villa Medici a Fiesole. Leon Battista Alberti and the Prototype of the Renaissance Villa*, 170.

masterpiece right in front of you. The design of the terraces follows the villa's simple forms and proportions. The garden part, which is protected on three sides, has been built in a very difficult place. But it is its location on the steep slope of the mountain which gives the impression of the garden hanging above the city of Florence. The beauty of the villa and its garden lies primarily in the simplicity and harmony of its proportions.

Furthermore, it is not only the villa in Fiesole whose garden is embellished by views over the Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore; the dome of the cathedral of Florence is also visible from Palazzo Pitti on the other shore of the Arno River, from an orderly walled part of a garden where straight lines cross at right angles. Thanks to the superbly chosen location, it has views over the city of Florence and the hillsides, making them seem almost like organic parts of the garden.

Fiesole could have been the first garden to be designed as an extension of architecture. Villa Medici in Fiesole becomes the prototype of the Renaissance villa, which marks the transformation of Tuscany's *villa rustica*, or country villa, to *villa suburbana*, or suburban villa, where agriculture loses its importance and leisure time, *otium*, gains significance. It is the place that Pliny described as a harmonious idyll where scents and sounds lift the spirits.²³ Leisure time as described by Pliny is the most important marker of Early Renaissance gardens. The Roman garden concept is carried into Early Renaissance gardens. The villa garden of the Quattrocento with its strict yet simple geometrical form encourages the flight of free thought. The garden differs clearly from the surrounding natural environment, providing a secure space, and with its modest design presents a world of fantasy akin to Platonic love. The garden of the Quattrocento is primarily a place of free thought. "Contented, I pondered these things in peaceful isolation in Fiesole, in the peaceful haven of the Medici near Florence /.../ where Lorenzo enjoys a pleasant stay and peaceful quietude."²⁴

23 Ackerman, *The villa. Form and Ideology of Country Houses*, 74.

24 Angelo Poliziano, *Rusticus* (1483).



FIG. 5. WOOD MAQUETTE BY FRANCO GIZDULICH OF GIULIANO DA SANGALLO'S ORIGINAL DESIGN FOR THE VILLA OF POGGIO A CAIANO. 1992. M1:50. PHOTO: NELE NUTT, 2023.

POGGIO A CAIANO

Similarly to Fiesole, a cubical villa covered in bright plaster, built a few years later (building commenced in 1485) by Lorenzo de' Medici in Poggio a Caiano, stands out from the landscape. A higher hill on the plain between Florence and Pistoia was chosen as the location of the villa, with a panoramic view of the plain and the surrounding mountains. "A paradigm of the first is Lorenzo de' Medici villa at Poggio a Caiano outside Florence, which is described within a cube, façade with white stucco to emphasize its total polarity to the irrationality of foliage and rolling hills, and, to underscore this message, raised on a high podium to ensure that the contact of the residents with nature should not be intimate but removed and in perspective."²⁵

Poggio a Caiano, just as the Villa Medici in Fiesole, is observable from a distance. It answers fully to Alberti's requirement that

25 Ackerman, *The villa. Form and Ideology of Country Houses*, 22.



FIG. 6. PANORAMA VIEW OVER THE LANDSCAPE FROM THE VILLA'S TERRACE. PHOTO: NELE NUTT, 2023.

emphasises visibility. When in 1485 Giuliano da Sangallo (1445–1516), Lorenzo Il Magnifico's favourite architect, begins designing the villa of Poggio a Caiano, he demands that every chapter of Alberti's *De re aedificatoria* is sent to him as soon as it is published.²⁶ Thus the villa's architecture follows the criteria set out in Alberti's treatise on architecture. This new concept of opening outwards becomes the norm in the future.

The villa's garden is located on a lower terrace to the side of the building and bordered by a wall. Similarly to other contemporary gardens, its design is extremely orderly and consists of simple imagery. Magnificent views that stretch to the mountains on the horizon belong to the villa and garden.

THE GARDEN OF THE CINQUECENTO AS A SURPRISE

The Renaissance garden was a matter of male pride, a meeting point of art and science, integrating architecture, landscape and society.²⁷ The owners of the villas commissioned complicated water systems in the parks, fire-spewing mountains, and artificial caves (grottos), where strange creatures can make one uneasy. Grottos, which are very common in Greek and Roman mythology, are also used in Renaissance gardens. The purpose of their creation was on the one hand to astonish the viewer, but also to try out different new

²⁶ *Villa Medici a Fiesole. Leon Battista Alberti and the Prototype of the Renaissance Villa*, 170.

²⁷ Tom Turner, *Garden Design: History, Philosophy and Styles* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2004).



FIG. 7. GROTTOS. ON THE LEFT, GROTTO OF MADAMA OF THE BOBOLI GARDENS, AND ON THE RIGHT, MASCARON IN THE CEILING OF THE GROTTO IN THE GARDEN IN CASTELLO. PHOTOS: NELE NUTT, 2023.

materials (limestone, concrete, terracotta). With their water features, grottos offer startling surprises, in contrast to the orderly geometrical design of the rest of the garden. Their interiors are decorated with sculptures and murals that tell tales of ancient mythology, which are also metaphorically connected to contemporary achievements. In a grotto you are always surrounded by water, it streams down the walls, erupts from nozzles beneath your feet and drips down from the stalactites in the ceiling. As artificial caves, grottos provide shelter from the spring showers, hot summer sun and cold winter wind. The grottos' decor may be a tad scary and their closing gates may leave you trapped inside.

The first artificial caves, which became the examples for the Renaissance era grottos, were built in the Boboli Gardens. The Grotto of Madama (1553–1555) is small in its dimensions and only consists of one cave. In the opposite wall to the entrance of the grotto there is an oval basin standing on lion's paws. Above the basin there are sculptures of animals (a goat and a ram). The grotto has been decorated with cherubs and mascarons and stalactites. Side walls contain niches and the cave is domed by coffered ceiling. The rustic Big Grotto (1583–1593), designed by Buontalenti, consists of three successive rooms that are decorated with allegorical and magical elements. The first chamber is dedicated to nature and metamorphoses. In partial shade, stucco figures inspired by pastorals

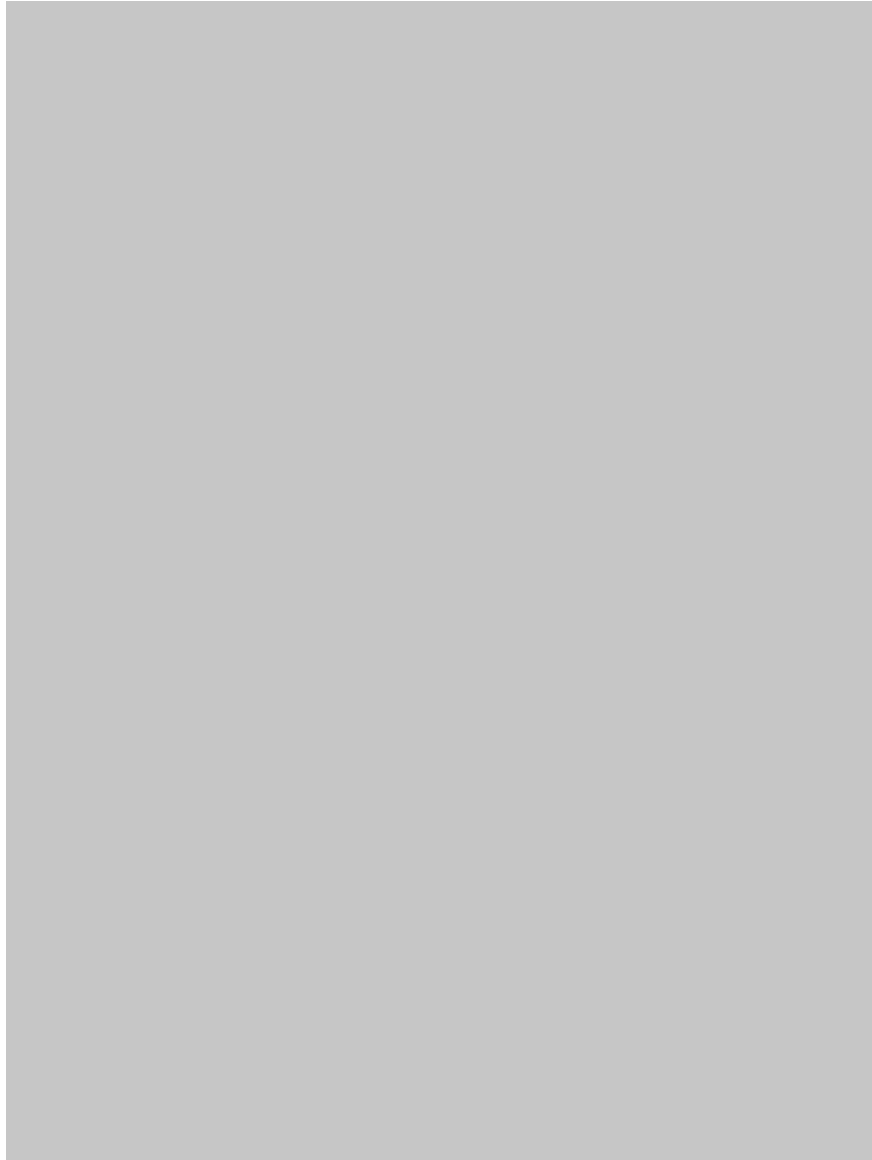


FIG. 8. THE BIG GROTTA OF THE BOBOLI GARDENS. THE SCULPTURE OF PARIS AND HELEN IS VISIBLE IN THE BACK CHAMBER. MICHELANGELO'S SLAVES ARE IN THE CORNERS OF THE FIRST CHAMBER. PHOTO: NELE NUTT, 2023.

emerge from the walls.²⁸ The walls and ceiling are decorated by frescos depicting fantastical animals, which amplify the surreal atmosphere. In the four corners, Michaelangelo's Slaves are trying to free themselves from the block of marble, thus symbolising the power and transformation of nature that in alchemy can turn lead into gold. The second chamber is square-shaped, symbolising the four elements. The walls of the chamber are decorated with scenes from the Trojan war. In the centre there is a sculpture of Paris and Helen in an embrace. In the centre of the last chamber, whose oval shape symbolises the egg, there is a statue of Bathing Venus, signifying love and the life-giving power of nature.

The Grotto of the Animals (Tribolo 1537) of the villa at Castello symbolises the flood. The walls and ceiling of the grotto are richly decorated with mascarons made of shells and marble pieces. On either side of the chamber there are marble basins that are decorated with aquatic animals and stand on legs designed as turtles and fish. The group of terrestrial animals above the basins seems to rise out of the rock. Above the basin in the central chamber there is a third group of animals dominated by a statue of a unicorn, symbolising the purifying nature of water. The sculptures of animals are surrounded by countless artificial stalactites. In the middle of the grotto there stood Orpheus with a lyre, whose music tamed the wild animals, symbolising the rise to power of Cosimo de Medici.

The wonders of the garden of the Villa di Pratolino were praised even before their completion in 1575.²⁹ Alongside the Apennine Colossus by Giambologna, grandiose water systems and cascades, the complex also included various artificial caves. Similarly to earlier grottos, snail shells and artificial stalactites were used in their decor. The largest grotto, located on the main axis of the garden, consisted of three caves. The central one contained a sculpture depicting the Mugnone river.

In addition to grottos, the Renaissance garden contains increasing numbers of objects whose purpose is to surprise, startle, astonish. There are colossal sculptures (the Apennine Colossus in Pratolino) and abundant water features (fountains in Castello). Plenty of everything to grab the visitor's attention completely. External environment

28 Mariachiara Pozzana, *The Gardens of Florence and Tuscany* (Firenze: Giunti, 2017), 14.

29 Isabella Lapi Ballerini, *The Medici Villas* (Florence: Giunti, 2011), 95.

becomes increasingly dominating. With that, the characteristic freshness of the Early Renaissance disappears. However, the clear, simple (not overpowering) design which encouraged the visitors' sensitivity had been the thing that created potentialities for the birth of philosophy and poetry. The garden becomes a thought-inhibiting "Disneyland".

CONCLUSION

On certain days, presenters of things came to collect signatures that were given under one tree or other and by gently babbling brooks. Every day new journeys were made, new springs were sought, new shades... the pope (he refers to himself in the third person) gladly conferred with the cardinals of the consistory under chestnut trees or welcomed people in a meadow. Not a day passed without his being carried through a forest; members of the curia followed him; both personal and generic things were discussed on the way. Before nightfall, the pope went to a place near the monastery with views over wheat fields; he sat down with nuns and indulged in pleasant conversations. There was a strange feeling of wellbeing. Everything in the valley was burnt by the sun, the trees drooping in withering meadows, the land burnt to dust as if Phaeton with his fire had travelled across it. However, around the monastery and on the hills everything was green; there was no trace of the heat, one could breathe in the breeze with pleasure. One could have thought that this was a place for the blessed, the valley below a place of torture for the damned.³⁰

Pius II, 1464

Thus Pius II compared free nature to paradise and considered the beauty of nature so important that next to many significant historical events that he describes under the title *Commentaries of Pope Pius II on the Memorable Events of His Time*, he has devoted many long passages to praising nature.

The Renaissance garden is a meeting point of two contrasting worlds. The natural environment still intimidates humans to the extent that they feel safe inside a territory surrounded by high walls, where plants are forced into frames prescribed by humans. This is an

30 Pius II (1405–1464), *Commentarii* (1464) translated from the book by Söderhjelm, *Itaalia renessanss*, 43–44.

understandable and secure environment for the Renaissance human, where nothing unpredictable happens, everything is under human control. At the same time, mysticism, legends and myths, in the shape of sculptures, have an important place in the garden. However, their selection is not accidental but very thoroughly thought through.

And yet there is an irresistible yearning for freedom, and the illusion that the garden stretches out to infinity. Everything the eye can catch belongs to the garden. Views over wild landscapes speak of longing for the natural environment like the poetry of Petrarch that is recited in these gardens. Strict rules and infinite sense of freedom both belong to the Renaissance garden. This contradiction makes the Early Renaissance garden simultaneously tangible and intangible, and therein lies its charm.

The design of later gardens is intensely full of surprises. Water features, fountains, grottos, myths and legends surround the visitor everywhere, never letting the emotional world, which requires peace and quietude, to emerge. The garden design offers an abundance of emotions whose purpose is to provide amusement and spectacle.

"They walked out into a meadow, where the grass grew verdantly, and the sunbeams could not reach and where mild wind blew. In this grass they sat down in a round ring at the queen's request /---/ to spend time telling pleasant tales."³¹

NELE NUTT: THE RENAISSANCE GARDEN AND ITS CONTRADICTIONS
KEYWORDS: RENAISSANCE GARDEN; QUATTROCENTO; CINQUECENTO;
 PARK ARCHITECTURE

SUMMARY

This article looks at the contradictory essence of the Renaissance garden, which is reflected in the dialogue of the garden's form and content, and which is in constant change. While the garden of the Quattrocento with its formal language of rigid geometric rules stimulates free thought and the emotional world, remaining a modest background itself, the garden of the Cinquecento dictates the direction of thought and produces concrete frames for it. The

31 Giovanni Boccaccio, *Dekameron* (Tallinn: Eesti Riiklik Kirjastus, 1957), 20.

thought of the Early Renaissance, boundlessly freewheeling in the world of fantasy, is increasingly tied to the garden's form. The gentle emotion of the inner world is suffocated by the intruders from the outer world and the garden that carried the free thought of Early Renaissance becomes an area of restraint.

CV

Nele Nutt, landscape architecture (PhD), civil engineering and architecture (PhD), has been teaching civil engineers and landscape architects at Tallinn University of Technology for a long time. Nutt has published articles on theoretical and methodological treatment of landscape, historical parks and the impact of gentrification on city planning. She has given presentations at international conferences and been editor-in-chief of a scientific journal. Nutt's main interests involve landscapes of the past, landscape architecture and architecture.