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**PARTERRE ORNAMENTATION IN THE
PUBLICATIONS OF THE 16TH–17TH CENTURIES.
THE USE OF THE DOLPHIN IMAGE IN
GARDEN DESIGN**

INTRODUCTION

In mid-15th century, approximately around the year 1450, the very first pages came hot off the Gutenberg printing press. *De architectura* by Vitruvius was first published as an appendix to *De Aqueductibus Urbis Romae* by Frontinus in 1486. This was followed by several reprints and translations, and in 1520 the treatise by Vitruvius was published in Italian. A little less than twenty years later (1537), Sebastiano Serlio's treatise on architecture in Italian *Tutte l'opere d'architettura, et prospetiva* is published, where in addition to architectural theory Serlio also touches on garden architecture. This article takes Serlio's treatise as a starting point from where it is possible to study garden architecture through plans.¹ Many publications that deal with park design are issued in the following years. They allow us today, when the parks created in the 16th century have either been destroyed or altered beyond recognition, to examine the principles of the 16th century garden design through the eyes of their contemporaries.

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¹ 1499 saw the publication of *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, where the allegorical story is illustrated by xylographs depicting ancient ruins, gazebos, topiary art and flowerbed patterns.

The printing press makes it possible for us to observe the genesis of the 16th century garden design.

The deciding factor in finding suitable publications for this analysis was the occurrence of design plans (plant bed designs) in the publication. The books that were studied were published during a period of over a hundred years (1537–1652) and deal with very different aspects, starting with Serlio's architectural treatise of 1537 and finishing with the works of Claude Mollet and André Mollet, published more than a hundred years after Serlio's treatise. These are *Le Jardin de Plaisir* and *Théâtre des plans et jardinages*, both published in the 1650s. Leaving aside the discussions on the authorships of the illustrations in the books², this article focuses on the analysis of what is depicted in the drawings.

In garden design, as in every other art form, the visual is the most informative substance. The illustrations in focus in this article include plans for the grounds of buildings, such as we see in Serlio's work, as well as Jacques Boyceau's plans for the parterres de broderie³ with intricate arabesque patterns. From book to book, the parterre⁴ patterns become increasingly complicated, the simple geometrical figures of the Renaissance become intricate lacework, in whose patterns, besides the rulers' monograms, we can also find both plant and animal ornamentation. While plant ornamentation permeates the plant bed design of the whole period, and also later, animal ornamentation becomes more popular during the Mannerist period, in accord with the rest of the Mannerist garden design. The plant bed designers' imagination seems boundless and so in plant bed patterns we encounter various bestial creatures, with recognizable influences from classical mythology. One of the animals known from the classical mythology that has been used in parterre design is the dolphin. As a symbol of love and friendliness, it fits in naturally with the garden as paradise.

2 E.g. Claude Mollet's *Théâtre des plans et jardinages* contains flowerbed designs in different handwritings, some of which have been signed by Claude Mollet's father, Jacques Mollet. This article mentions the author on the book's title page, without separate allusions to authors of the plans.

3 *Parterre de broderie* is a parterre that resembles the intricate patterns of broderie anglaise. See Sulev Nurme, Nele Nutt, *Pargiterminite seletussõnaraamat* (Tallinn: Keskkonnaamet, 2012).

4 Parterre is a level surface that is decorated with artistic plant beds, usually observable from a higher position. See Nurme, Nutt, *Pargiterminite seletussõnaraamat*.

Dolphins were not only used in parterre patterns, but thanks to the advancement of hydro-technology during the period, complicated water systems also needed an aesthetic expression, in addition to technical solutions. Dolphins, as water animals and attributes of classical gods, were an organic fit for water displays decorated with classical mythology-themed sculpture groups.

DOLPHINS IN CLASSICAL MYTHOLOGY

In both Greek and Roman mythology, dolphins (Gr. *delphis*, Lat. *delphinus*⁵) symbolised friendliness, selflessness and love, being one of the four attributes (the others being the dove, the rose and the seashell) of the goddess of love (Greek – Aphrodite, Roman – Venus). The dolphin was also one of the three attributes (others being the trident and the tuna) of the god of the sea (Greek – Poseidon, Roman – Neptune). There are numerous stories in classical literature about friendships between dolphins and humans. In the *Achilleid*⁶ (94–96 CE) by Statius,⁷ the immortal sea nymph Thetis invites dolphins to help him to carry his sleeping son, ‘Then she calls out from the waves and bridles with a sharp-edged shell her team of dolphins twain, which Tethys, mighty queen, had nourished for her in an echoing vale beneath the sea’.⁸ In *Imagines*, Philostratus praises the dolphins' swimming ability, ‘There, I imagine your thought is of dry-land horses – for Homer maintains that they are “bronze-hoofed”, “swiftly-flying” and “smitten by the lash” – but here it is hippocamps that draw the chariot, creatures with web-footed hoofs, good swimmers, blue-eyed, and, by Zeus, in all respects like dolphins’.⁹ In his most well-known work (around 23–79) *Naturalis Historia*, Pliny the Elder (Gaius Plinius Secundus) describes the

5 *Antiigileksikon 1* (Tallinn: Valgus, 1983), 111; *delphis* signifies dolphin, *delphys* means the womb.

6 1st CE. Statius, *Thebaid*, *Achilleid*, transl. by J. H. Mozley (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann, 1928).

7 PUBLIUS PAPINIUS STATIUS was a Roman poet who flourished in the late 1st CE. during the reign of the Emperor Domitian.

8 Statius, *Thebaid*, *Achilleid*, 217; <https://www.theoi.com/Text/StatiusAchilleid1A.html> [accessed 20/01/2024].

9 Elder Philostratus, Younger Philostratus, *Callistratus*, transl. by A. Fairbanks (London: William Heinemann, 1931); <https://www.theoi.com/Text/PhilostratusElder1A.html> [accessed 20/01/2024].

dolphin, ‘As for Hares, seldome be they made tame, and to come to hand: and yet justly they cannot be called simply wild. For many other such creatures there be besides, that neither are savage, ne yet tame and gentle, but of a middle nature betweene both. As namely among flying foules in the aire, the Swallow: likewise the Bee: and among fishes, the Dolphin in the sea’,¹⁰ adding, ‘The Swiftest of all other living creatures whatsoever, and not of sea-fish only, is the Dolphin, The Dolphin is a creature that carrieth a loving affection not only unto man, but also to musicke: delighted he is with harmonie in song, but especially with the sound of the water instrument, or such kind of pipes. Of a man he is nothing affraid, neither avoideth from him as a stranger; but of himselfe meeteth with their ships, plaieth and disporteth himselfe, and fetcheth a thousand friskes and gambols before them. Hee will swimme along by the mariners, as it were for a wager, who should make way most speedily, and alwaies out-goeth them, saile they with never so good a fore-wind’.¹¹ He describes a great friendship between a boy and a dolphin, ‘In the daies of Augustus Cæsar the Emperour, there was a Dolphin entred the gulfe or poole Lucrinus, which loved wonderous well a certain boy, a poore mans sonne: who using to go every day to schoole from Baianum to Puteoli, was woont also about noone-tide to stay at the water side, and to call unto the Dolphin, Simo, Simo, and many times would give him fragments of bread, which of purpose hee ever brought with him, and by this meane allured the Dolphin to come ordinarily unto him at his call’,¹² and he relates the well-known story of Arion, ‘This Arion being a notable musitian and plaier of the harpe, chaunced to fall into the hands of certain mariners in the ship wherein he was, who supposing that he had good store of money about him, which he had gotten with his instrument, were in hand to kill him and cast him over-board for the said money, and so to intercept all his gaines: he, seeing himselfe at their devotion and mercie, besought

10 Caius Plinius Secundus, *The Historie of the World*. Book VIII, transl. by Philemon Holland (London: A. Islip, 1601), 192–234.

11 Caius Plinius Secundus, *The Historie of the World*. Book IX, transl. by Philemon Holland (London: A. Islip, 1601), 234–270. Caius Plinius Secundus, *The Ninth Booke of the Historie of Nature*, Chap. 8. – Dolphins.

12 Ibid.

them in the best manner that he could devise, to suffer him yet before he died, to play one fit of mirth with his harpe; which they graunted: (at his musicke and sound of harpe, a number of dolphins came flocking about him:) which done, they turned him over ship-board into the sea; where one of the dolphins tooke him upon his backe, and carried him safe to the bay of Tænarus’.¹³ Herodotus, too, in his *Histories* tells how a dolphin saved Arion from mortal danger and took him to Cape Tainaron, after some sailors had robbed him and forced him to jump into the sea on his way back to Corinth from Tarentum.

Dolphins are also mentioned in *Homeric Hymns*, where Apollo changes himself into a dolphin in order to direct the ships, ‘in the open sea he sprang upon their ship, like a dolphin in shape, and lay there, a great awesome monster’,¹⁴ and Dionysos saves sailors who are jumping into the sea from drowning by turning them into dolphins, ‘And so the sailors fled into the stern and crowded bemused about the right-minded helmsman, until suddenly the lion sprang upon the master and seized him; and when the sailors saw it they leapt out overboard one and all into the bright sea, escaping from a miserable fate, and were changed into dolphins’.¹⁵

In the antiquity, the dolphin was the mediator between the worlds of the living, the dead and the gods, containing within itself elements from all three realities. The dolphins’ intelligence, playfulness, love of music and their mutual affectionate friendships made them similar to humankind; while their unconventional respect for the dead indicated their connection with the underworld (dolphins carry their dead companions to the shore so that other marine animals would not eat them). The sanctity of the dolphin is certified by the fact that as companions to the gods, dolphins were not hunted for food by humans – it was considered sacrilege. Despite that, the Romans, pragmatic as they were, made sausages out of dolphin meat.¹⁶ Writers told about the dolphin’s strange

13 Ibid.

14 THE HOMERIC HYMNS, 388, Hesiod, *Homeric Hymns, Epic Cycle, Homeric*, transl. by H. G. Evelyn-White (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann, 1914); <https://www.theoi.com/Text/HomericHymns1.html> [accessed 20/01/2024].

15 Ibid.

16 *Antiigileksikon 1*, 111.

behaviour, which displayed their selfless love for humans. Thus the dolphin became the symbol of humanity. Anatomical study of dolphins started with the Greek philosopher Aristotle over 2,300 years ago.¹⁷

DEPICTION OF DOLPHINS IN ART

The importance of dolphins in Greco-Roman mythology is evident in their depictions in many mosaics. The earliest surviving artwork depicting dolphins comes from the Knossos Palace in Minoan Crete (3650–1400 BC¹⁸). The Dolphin Fresco in the Heraklion Archaeological Museum depicts dolphins freely swimming with fishes in water (Fig. 1). Compared to later mosaics, the frescos found in Crete depict dolphins in a very lifelike manner and in their natural environment. Mosaics from later antiquity depict dolphins alongside mythological creatures and that may be the reason why they do not resemble natural dolphins. Mythical creatures ride grotesque dolphins on the large-scale mosaics decorating the floors and ceilings of Roman villas. In the 4th century mosaic in Villa Romana del Casale in Sicily, Arion is depicted escaping the robbers, while sitting on a dolphin and playing the lyre. A floor mosaic from approximately 120–80 BC in Delos depicts Eros riding dolphins, and in a mosaic depicting the myth of Oceanus and Tethys, in the pool of the house of Oceanus from the Roman period, Cupid rides a dolphin (The Zeugma Mosaic Museum, Gaziantep, Turkey). At the time of the creation of the Roman mosaics, the Crete frescos had not been found yet (they were discovered by Evans after 1893), and therefore they could not have been used as templates.

During Renaissance, when themes from classical mythology become popular again, they play an important part in the works of both writers and artists.¹⁹ Poems by Angelo Ambrogini, whose nom de plume was Poliziano (1454–1494), are inspired by Petrarch, who invented the idea of Platonic love together with the accompanying

17 Bruno Cozzi, Stefan Huggenberger, Helmut A Oelschläger, 'Natural History and Evolution of Dolphins: Short History of Dolphin Anatomy', *Anatomy of Dolphins* (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2017); DOI: 10.1016/B978-0-12-407229-9.00001-4 [accessed 20/01/2024].

18 'Ancient Crete', *Oxford Bibliographies*; <https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/display/document/obo-9780195389661/obo-9780195389661-0071.xml> [accessed 20/01/2024].

19 The poem by Angelo Poliziano inspired Botticelli to paint the *Birth of Venus*.



FIG. 1. THE DOLPHIN FRESCO. THE EAST END OF QUEEN'S MEGARON IN THE PALACE OF KNOSSOS. NEOPALATIAL PERIOD. 1750 B.C.E.–1490 B.C.E. THE HERAKLION ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM. PHOTO: ROBERT NUTT, 2023.

melancholy, longing and sensitivity.²⁰ Poliziano's *Stanze per la giostra* is a tale based on the classical myth of Galatea²¹ and Pygmalion. The myth recounts how Pygmalion, son of Belus, falls in love with Aphrodite, but since the goddess does not wish to mate with him, he makes an ivory statue of Aphrodite and places it in his bed, begging the goddess to have mercy on him. As Aphrodite enters the statue, she brings it to life in the shape of Galatea, who gives Pygmalion children Paphos and Metharme. Pygmalion's son Paphos fathers Cinyras who builds the city of Paphos in Cyprus and erects the famous Sanctuary of Aphrodite in there.²² Inspired by the myth of Galatea and Pygmalion, Angelo Poliziano expresses his feelings in verse:

20 Jüri Talvet, *Maailmakirjandus. Lääne kirjandus antiigist romantismini* (Tartu: Tartu Ülikooli Kirjastus, 2019), 128.

21 Galatea, beautiful Nereid, daughter of Nereus and Doris; was in love with the crude Cyclops Polyphemus. See *Antiigileksikon 1*, 161.

22 Apollodoros, iii. 14.3; Ovidius, 'Metamorfoosid', x 243 ff; Arnobius, 'Rahvaste vastu', vi 22.

*Duo formosi delfini un carro tirono:
sovresso è Galatea che 'l fren corregge,
e quei notando parimente spirano;
ruotasi attorno più lasciva gregge:
qual le salse onde sputa, e quai s'aggirano,
qual par che per amor giuochi e vanegge;
la bella ninfa colle suore fide
di sì rozo cantor vezzosa ride.*²³

In turn, Poliziano's verses inspire Raphael (1483–1520), who paints the story of Galatea and Pygmalion in a fresco based on the myth on a wall of Agostino Chigi's villa (currently Villa Farnesina) in ca. 1512. In the fresco, Raphael does not depict the main event of the story but the apotheosis scene of Poliziano's nymph (*Stanze*, I, 118–119), where the boorish giant Polyphemus sings a love song to the beautiful sea nymph Galatea, who is crossing the waves in a chariot that is pulled by two dolphins, and laughing at the crude song, while a merry bunch of other sea gods and nymphs is swarming around her.²⁴ But before the chariot-pulling dolphins materialize in painting, the dolphin emerges in sculpture. In the Medici Villa at Careggi near Florence,²⁵ the sculpture *Putto with Dolphin*, commissioned from Anrea del Verrocchio (1435–1488) for the fountain in the courtyard, represents an aspiration to create a sculpture that could be equally viewable from every angle. Its central sculpture depicts a putto holding a dolphin in his arms.

DEPICTION OF DOLPHINS IN GARDEN DESIGN

The analysis of the depiction of dolphins in garden design is possible thanks to publications from the 16th–17th century, because gardens and parks from centuries ago have either perished or been redesigned

23 Angelo Poliziano, *Stanze per la giostra*, 1:118, 1475, transl. by D. Quint: Two shapely dolphins pull a chariot: on it sits Galatea and wields the reins; as they swim, they breathe in unison; a more wanton flock circles around them: one spews forth salt waves, others swim in circles, one seems to cavort and play for love; with her faithful sisters, the fair nymph charmingly laughs at such a crude singer.

24 Ernst H. Gombrich, *Kunsti lugu* (Tallinn: Avita, 2018), 319.

25 In the 16th century, when Cosimo I de Medici moved into Palazzo Vecchio, the fountain was brought into the front yard.

according to later fashion trends. The pages of the chosen 14 printed works contain plant bed designs as well as pictures of fountains and other garden elements (e.g. grottos). The first publication times of the works analysed comprise a period of over a hundred years (mid-16th century–mid-17th century) and they describe the transformation of the Renaissance garden into a Mannerist one, when Baroque's opulent movements may already be felt in the air.

The earliest work to contain garden design plans is *Tutte l'opere d'architettura, et prospetiva* by Sebastiano Serlio (1475–1554)²⁶ – a treatise that addresses theoretical and practical questions on architecture. The book is richly illustrated and therefore Serlio's tome on architecture is also of interest to those studying the matters of garden design. Namely, in many chapters, Serlio offers examples of plant bed designs. In the 12th chapter of book 4, called *De i Cielii piani de legname ja de gli ornamenti fuoi*, Serlio presents several plant bed drawings, including six labyrinth plans,²⁷ whose designs follow simple geometry, characteristic of the Renaissance. In the pages of books 6 and 7, next to building plans for houses, Serlio presents instructions for the organisation of the immediate vicinity of the houses. For example, Serlio has given design patterns for the plant beds in the grounds of the building as part of the projects for a governor's (LXV project T²⁸) and the king's palace (LXXI project W²⁹). The rectangular beds that are located in close proximity of the building, which is oriented on the central axis, are placed in an orderly manner and in their design Serlio uses, akin to the labyrinth designs, simple geometrical shapes, squares, circles, triangles, characteristic of the Renaissance.³⁰

From the point of view of the main focus of this article, Serlio's plant bed patterns are not too fascinating. However, there is reason to pay attention to the wooden ceiling decorations presented in the same

26 Sebastiano Serlio, *Tutte l'opere d'architettura, et prospetiva* (1537).

27 *Li giardini fono ancor loro parte dell'ornamento della fabrica. perilche quefte quattro figure differente? Qui fotto, fono per compartimenti d'esi giardini, ancora che per altre cofe potrebbero feruire, oltra li due Laberintii qui a dietro, che a tal propefito fono.*

28 Myra Nan Rosenfeld, *Serlio on Domestic Architecture. Sebastiano Serlio* (Mineola, N.Y.: Dover Publications, 1996).

29 Ibid.

30 Nele Nutt, 'The renaissance garden and its contradictions', *Baltic Journal of Art History*, 25 (2023), 43–62; DOI: 10.12697/BJAH.2023.25.03 [accessed 20/01/2024].

chapter. These are exquisitely crafted, detailed pattern combinations where plant and animal ornaments intertwine, among them we find dolphins, human figures and weapons. The difference between them and the plant bed patterns depicted in the treatise is radical. Not a single one of the elements used in the plant bed patterns resembles the detailed ornamentation of the ceiling design. We will have reason to return to these complicated ceiling decorations later.

Another book that concentrates on buildings, which alongside the plans for houses also presents designs for gardens, is published a couple of decades later in two volumes. The first volume of *Les plus excellenti basiments de France* by Jacques Androuet Du Cerceau³¹ (1511?–1586) is published in 1576. The second part is published a few years later, in 1579. In the plans for fortresses and castles of the 16th-century France, there is also a place for designs for the surrounds of the buildings. As in Serlio's case, Du Cerceau's plant beds are designed by forming abstract shapes with the help of squares and circles, characteristic of Renaissance. However, the garden is not organically linked to the house, it is located in a walled area detached from the building.

*Le Théâtre d'Agriculture et Ménage des Champs*³² by Olivier de Serres (Seigneur du Pradel, 1539–1619) is published in 1600, which includes, in addition to simple geometrical shapes, also more complicated bed plans, whose patterns are formed by plant ornaments.

In the 17th century, garden design, which previously had been a subplot in architectural books, becomes a main topic. Multiple books on garden design are published over a couple of decades, which, in addition to practical questions on garden construction, also present sketches for plant beds. The first one of these is *Hortus Palatinus*³³ by Salomon De Caus (1576–ca.1626) in 1620, and it introduces the garden of the Heidelberg Castle, owned by Frederick V, which abandons the simple geometry of the Renaissance. Although straight

31 Jacques Androuet Du Cerceau, *Les plus excellenti basiments de France* (le première volume 1576, seconde volume 1579).

32 Olivier de Serres, *Le Théâtre d'Agriculture et Ménage des Champs* (1600).

33 The garden of the Heidelberg Castle was designed by Salomon de Caus in the beginning of the 17th century for the royal couple Frederick V and Elizabeth Stuart. Although the garden was not finished because of the commencement of the Thirty Years' War, Hortus Palatinus is considered the best example of Renaissance and Mannerist gardens in today's Germany. The garden of Heidelberg Castle was designed as a landscape design complex, which is filled with symbols and homage to Frederick V of Palatinate.

lines and circles are used in the design, parterres with complicated patterns have now been elevated to centre stage, bordered by stricter geometry. Due to the technical achievements in the field of hydraulic engineering, abundant water elements have been planned for the garden, where water shoots up from nozzles, streams down the steps and trickles down the grotto walls. That grandiose garden was referred to as the eighth wonder of the world. Among the sculptures decorating the water features, we find characters familiar from classical mythology, who are placed both in the sculpture groups in the middle of sunny plant beds and in the depths of dark grottos. Dolphins have been used in the sculpture groups of the water features whose centres boast either Venus or Neptune. In the centre of the Venus basin, the Venus and Cupid sculptures are supported by four dolphins with intertwined tails (Fig. 2) and in the niche below the statue of Frederic VI, sea god Neptune is resting his foot on a dolphin. In addition to the sculptures, dolphins have also been used in parterre design. The central composition of the flower calendar with chromatically arranged types of flowers in the centre of the large parterre called 'The Flower Garden' is lined with eight pairs of entwined dolphins. Returning to the aforementioned wooden ceiling designs mentioned by Serlio, we can see some similarity between the dolphins used in the plant bed designs by de Caus and the dolphins of Serlio's ceiling design. Even though in the parterre the figures are in a considerably simpler form than in the arabesque ceiling design, the similarity of the mutual placement of the dolphins is perceptible (Fig. 3 and 4).

Some years later, in 1624, Salomon De Caus publishes a second book on park design, called *Les raisons des forces mouvantes*.³⁴ The pages of the book contain a large selection of water systems whose purpose is to surprise visitors to the garden. Among other things, it records the working principle of the water organ and the configurations of water-spewing hydraulic machines. The few plant bed designs depicted in the book are founded on simple geometry. Dolphins are part of the water element designs. One of them conceals with its tail the nudity of sea god Poseidon (Fig. 5). In grottos, Cupid sails on two dolphins (Fig. 6) and Poseidon on a shell (Fig. 7) which

34 Full title: *Les raisons des forces mouvantes, avec diverses machines tant utiles que plaisantes, ausquelles sont adjoints plusieurs desseins de grottes & fontaines augmentées de plusieurs figures, avec le discours sur chacune.*

is being pulled by two dolphins, similarly to the fresco by Raphael. We must pay attention also to the book's illustrations, because the beautiful vignettes decorating the beginnings of the chapters also contain images of dolphins (Fig. 8). To jump ahead, it can be said that similar, skilfully hidden images can be found in the complex designs of the parterres de broderie.

1629 sees the publication of *Paradisi in sole paradisis terrestriis* by John Parkinson, which treats the garden as paradise. The main focus of Parkinson's book is on the introduction of types of plants, it does not contain detailed plant bed patterns, but on one page, with the title 'The ordering of the garden of pleasure', there is a collection of six bed plans. Compared to the simple designs of the Renaissance, these are much more complex. We can see designs of this level of difficulty in the designs of the first (Pisa 1544) botanical gardens.³⁵ In *Livre de differants desseings de parterres*, published in 1630, Daniel Rabel describes the more complicated bed designs as having 'abnormally long arabesques and acanthus foliage, wavy and flowery, as well as broken interlaced bands rolling together in scrolls at their extremities'. Bed plans are also included in Giovanni Battista Ferrari's *Flora, ovvero cultura di Fiori*, published in 1638, although the design patterns are simple in there.

One of the most elegantly written and illustrated books is published in 1638. The *Traité du Jardinage selon les Raisons de la Nature et de l'Art* by Jacques Boyceau begins with an appeal to the king, 'Au roy, Sire, Ayant pleu a Dieu retirer de ceste vie le fleur de la Barauderie mon Oncle, que Vostre Maieste auoit bonore de la charge d'Intendant des Jardins de ses Maisons Royales; ie me suis tronne oblige pas son ordre de luy presenter ce Traicte du Jardinage, avec plusieurs deffins de Parterres, Bosquets et autres pareils ornemens de son inuention'.

Boyceau addresses garden design in the last of the three books, where he describes parterres, saying, '[the parterres] are made of borders of several shrubs and bushes of various colours, laid out in different ways of compartments, of foliage, braiding, moresque work, arabesques, grotesques, guilloches, rosettes, "gloires", shields, cartouches decorated with arms, monograms and emblems. Or else made of borders joining in perfect forms, or similar ones, in which

35 Four of those drawings are identical with the plant bed designs of the Botanical Garden in Padua (1545).

one uses rare plants, "rieurs" and grasses planted in order, or making thick lawns of one of several colours, like a carpet'.³⁶ Boyceau's three-part treatise presents the large parterre of the Luxembourg Garden – 'Grand Parterre du Jardin de la Royne mère à Luxembourg'. It constitutes the visual focus of the whole ensemble. The large square, topped with a semicircle, is densely filled with arabesque embroidery embellished by Marie de' Medici's crowned monogram. Marie de' Medici (1575–1642), wife of king Henry IV (1553–1610), had grown up at the Palazzo Pitti of Florence, which was surrounded by the Boboli Gardens, which is why the design of the Luxembourg Garden resembles that of Boboli's. Among the parterre patterns, in addition to the Marie de' Medici monogram, we also find depictions of dolphins formed out of acanthus foliage (Fig. 9, 10). This may allude to the title of the French kings – dauphin (*le dauphin* = 'dolphin' in French) during the Valois and Bourbon dynasties (1349–1830). Henry's father Antoine de Bourbon (1518–1562) was the king of Navarre and the first monarch of the Bourbons. There is a striking resemblance between Boyceau's plant bed designs, Serlio's ceiling patterns and the vignettes decorating the books, as though Boyceau had used them as models. However, Wilfried Hansmann believes that the dolphins depicted in the parterres may refer to the fountains in the centre of the parterres.³⁷ Dolphins were also used to decorate fountains. John Evelyn FRS (1620–1706) describes the large parterre of the Luxembourg Garden, 'Tis divided into four squares and as many circular knots, having in the center a noble basin of marble near thirty feet in diameter (as I remember), in which a Triton of brass holds a dolphin, that casts a girandola of water near thirty feet high, playing perpetually, the water being conveyed from Arceuil by an aqueduct of stone, built after the old Roman magnificence'.³⁸

Wilton Gardens by Isaac De Caus (1590–1648), published two years later, in 1640, consists of illustrations. The parterre designs in there are no longer simple, which is characteristic of the Renaissance, but made up of complex plant ornaments. Dolphins can be found in the fountain groups. Their upwards-extending tails form a pedestal

36 English translation: Laurent Paya (Centre d'études supérieures de la Renaissance, Tours / Artopos, Jardin et Paysage, Montpellier), 2012.

37 Wilfried Hansmann, *Das Gartenparterre: Gestaltung und Sinngehalt nach Ansichten, Plänen und Schriften aus sechs Jahrhunderten* (Worms: Wernersche Verlagsgesellschaft, 2009), 55.

38 *The Diary of John Evelyn* (London, 1818).



FIG. 2. THE VENUS BASIN IN THE *HORTUS PALATINUS*. THE STATUE OF VENUS AND CUPID IS RESTING ON THE ENTWINED TAILS OF FOUR DOLPHINS. SOURCE: SALOMON DE CAUS, *HORTUS PALATINUS* (1620).



FIG. 3. THE WOODEN CEILING DECORATION BY SERLIO WHICH DEPICTS COUPLES OF ENTANGLED DOLPHINS. SOURCE: SEBASTIANO SERLIO, *TUTTE L'OPERE D'ARCHITETTURA, ET PROSPETTIVA* (1537).



FIG. 4. FRAGMENT OF THE 'FLOWER GARDEN' PARTERRE OF THE *HORTUS PALATINUS*, WITH DEPICTIONS OF ENTANGLED COUPLES OF DOLPHINS. SOURCE: SALOMON DE CAUS, *HORTUS PALATINUS* (1620).

for the central sculpture and water jets erupt skywards from their nostrils. The sculpture groups of the Fontainebleau Fountains, which are famous for their water displays, also include dolphins and are depicted by Pierre Dan (158?–1649) in *Le tresor des merveilles de la maison royale de Fontainebleau*,³⁹ published in 1642 (see Fig. 11).

*Le Jardin de Plaisir*⁴⁰ by André Mollet (died before 1665) was published in 1651, and a year later, in 1652, *Théâtre des plans et jardinages* by Claude Mollet (1564–1649). The parterre designs in André Mollet's book contain strange mascarons, Pegasi, and chimeras or monsters, but not dolphins. The beautifully drawn parterre designs in Claude Mollet's book are composed of plant ornaments.

39 Full title: *Le tresor des merveilles de la maison royale de Fontainebleau. Contenant la description de son antiquité, de sa fondation, de ses bastimens, de ses rares peintures, tableaux, emblemes, & devises: de ses jardins, de ses fontaines, & autres singularitez qui s'y voyent. Ensemble les traictes de paix, les assemblées, les conférences, les entrées royales, les naissances, & ceremonies de baptesme de quelques enfans de France; les mariages, les tournoys, & autres magnificences, qui s'y sont faictes jusques à présent. Par le R. P. F. Pierre Dan, bachelier en theologie de la Faculté de Paris, ministre & superieur du couvent de l'ordre de la S. Trinité, & redemption des captifs, fondé au chasteau dudit Fontainebleau.*

40 Full title: *Le Jardin de Plaisir: contenant plusieurs dess eins de jardinage, tant parterres en broderie, compartiments de gazon, que bosquets, & autres, avec vn abbrege de l'agriculture.*



FIG. 5. THE STATUE OF POSEIDON IN THE CENTRE OF A FOUNTAIN, WITH A DOLPHIN'S TAIL OBSCURING THE PRIVATES OF THE DEITY. SOURCE: SALOMON DE CAUS, *LES RAISONS DES FORCES MOUVANTES* (1624).



FIG. 6. GROTTA DESIGN. SOURCE: SALOMON DE CAUS, *LES RAISONS DES FORCES MOUVANTES* (1624).



FIG. 7. GROTTA DESIGN. SOURCE: SALOMON DE CAUS, *LES RAISONS DES FORCES MOUVANTES* (1624).



FIG. 8. USE OF DOLPHINS IN BOOK VIGNETTING. DOLPHINS ARE SKILFULLY INTEGRATED INTO THE ARABESQUE VIGNETTE PATTERN OF ACANTHUS FOLIAGE. SOURCE: SALOMON DE CAUS, *LES RAISONS DES FORCES MOUVANTES* (1624).



FIG. 9. GRAND PARTERRE DU JARDIN DE LA ROYNE MÈRE À LUXEMBOURG. SOURCE: JACQUES BOYCEAU, *TRAITÉ DU JARDINAGE SELON LES RAISONS DE LA NATURE ET DE L'ART* (1638).



FIG. 10. FRAGMENT OF GRAND PARTERRE DU JARDIN DE LA ROYNE MÈRE À LUXEMBOURG. SOURCE: JACQUES BOYCEAU, *TRAITÉ DU JARDINAGE SELON LES RAISONS DE LA NATURE ET DE L'ART* (1638).

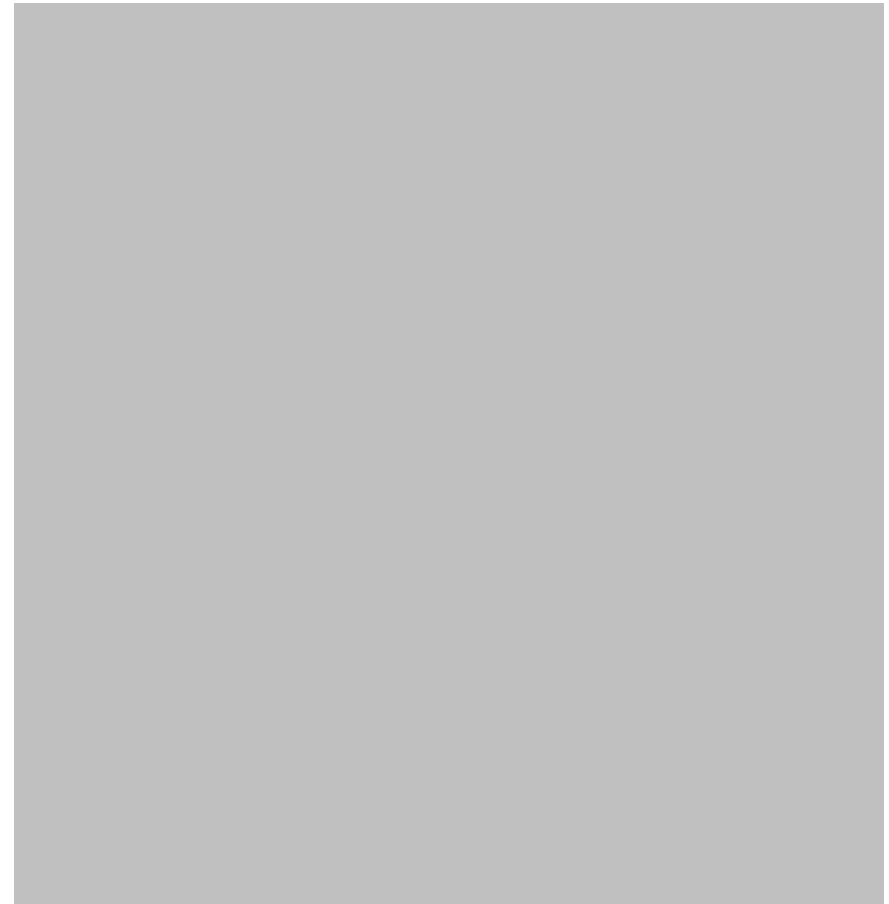


FIG. 11. THE CENTRAL STATUE OF PERSEUS IS SURROUNDED BY FOUR DOLPHINS WITH WATER ERUPTING FROM THEIR MOUTHS. SOURCE: PIERRE DAN, *LES TRESOR DES MERVEILLES DE LA MAISON ROYALE DE FONTAINBLEAU* (1642).



FIG. 12. DEPICTION OF DOLPHINS: SALOMON DE CAUS, *HORTUS PALATINUS* (6), *LES RAISONS DES FORCES MOUVANTES* (2) (IN BOOK VIGNETTE); SEBASTIANO SERLIO (1, 3, 8, 10, 14); JACQUES BOYCEAU (7, 12 [IN BOOK VIGNETTE], 13, 15, 18); *GRAND PARTERRE DU JARDIN DE LA ROYNE MÈRE À LUXEMBOURG* (16), *PARTERRE DE CHATEAU DE VERSAILLES* (4, 9, 11), *PARTERRE DE JARDIN DU LOUVRE* (5), *PARTERRE DE S'GERMAIN EN LAYE* (17).

CONCLUSION

The 16th–17th century publications afford a great overview of their contemporary garden designs. Thanks to the books that have survived till now, we are able to study the garden design of the end

of the Renaissance, the Mannerist period and the beginning of the Baroque. That entire garden design period is characterised by the use of parterres. The parterre designs found on the pages of those books become increasingly complicated. When Serlio's designs for the surrounds of buildings are simple and laconic, characteristically of the Renaissance garden design, the parterres of mid-17th century are decorated with intricate arabesques. Inside the complex parterres de broderie, garden designers hide symbols that remain unnoticed at first glance. The first such messages hidden within lacy patterns can be found in Boyceau's *Treatise on Gardening According to the Reasons of Nature and Art*. Out of the twining acanthus leaves, the park designer forges dolphins, symbols of the French kings. And even before that, Salomon De Caus has decorated flowerbeds with dolphins in the *Hortus Palatinus*. While the dolphins of the *Hortus Palatinus* are easily detected, Boyceau's dolphins reveal themselves to those who have time to delve. Dolphins formed out of acanthus leaves blend so organically into the rest of the pattern that they remain unnoticeable at first sight. Just as the Mannerist garden design characteristically constantly surprises the visitor, the moment of surprise is guaranteed also when skilfully hidden messages emerge from an arabesque pattern. Nonetheless, it is not garden designers who first created those patterns. Serlio presents almost indistinguishably similar delicate patterns on the pages of his treatise on architecture. Albeit still as ceiling decorations, but also concealing dolphins, who suddenly become visible on closer inspection. We may assume that the king's gardeners had access to older publications and both the ceiling designs and the book decorations were used as models.

In the treatise *L'Histoire naturelle des estranges poisons*, published in 1551, Pierre Belon (1517–1564) describes the depiction of dolphins in his contemporary art, "modern painters" as representing nothing from nature, but instead as portraying sea monsters'.⁴¹ In contrast to the frescos found in Crete, where dolphins are depicted naturally, the dolphins of the garden designers rather resemble the dolphins of Roman mosaics and Serlio's ceiling designs. The grotesque

41 Kay Etheridge, 'Defining the Dolphin', *Annual Conference of the Renaissance Society of America* (Venice, 2010).

dolphins imitate ancient Roman mosaics, and with their strange appearance suit the ideas of Mannerist garden design.

While plant ornamentation is heavily used throughout the period, we do not find as much animal ornamentation in the designs. Dolphins, as important symbols of love and friendship have been beloved figures in garden design. In addition to the parterre designs, they can be found in water feature ensembles, fountain groups and niches in grottos.

NELE NUTT: PARTERRE ORNAMENTATION IN THE PUBLICATIONS OF THE 16TH–17TH CENTURIES. THE USE OF THE DOLPHIN IMAGE IN GARDEN DESIGN

KEYWORDS: MANERISTIC GARDEN; PARK ARCHITECTURE; PARTERRE ORNAMENTATION; DOLPHIN PATTERNS; PARTERRE DE BRODERIE

SUMMARY

The 16th–17th century publications afford a great overview of their contemporary garden designs. Thanks to the books that have survived till now, we are able to study the garden design of the end of the Renaissance, the Mannerist period and the beginning of the Baroque. That entire garden design period is characterised by the use of parterres. While plant ornamentation is heavily used throughout the period, we do not find as much animal ornamentation in the designs. Dolphins, as important symbols of love and friendship have been beloved figures in garden design. In addition to the parterre designs, they can be found in water feature ensembles, fountain groups and niches in grottos.

CV

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