
Track No. Engineering/ Technology the Villa of Bagnaia: Villa Lante

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Abstract: *Villa Lante is a considerable noble residence whose Italian garden is one of the best known of the sixteenth century. It was built in 1568 by Cardinal Gian Francesco Gambara, bishop of Viterbo, on a possible project by Jacopo Barozzi da Vignola. The gardens are the main attraction of the Villa.*

1. BAGNAIA AND ITS VILLAGE

Bagnaia is a small town located near Viterbo, and the town had served as a country residence for generations of the Bishops of Viterbo [1]. The first information on the fortified primitive nucleus dates back to the second half of the 10th century (963 A.D), when the village was known as Bangaria.

There were three Viterbo bishops who focused their attention on both political and administrative events and patronage: Raffaele Sansoni Riario, relative of Pope Sixtus IV, from 1498-1506, Niccolò Ridolfi from 1532-1548 and Giovan Francesco Gambara from 1566-1587; all three contributed to the definition of the urban planning of the town [2].

On the death of Cardinal Gambara, Bagnaia was granted to Ippolito Lante Montefeltro della Rovere. The Lante family was responsible for a complete urban overhaul operation, which began in 1538, the date corresponding to the construction of the road that connects Bagnaia to the Viterbo district known as La Quercia.

From the building point of view, Bagnaia appears as a stratified center, very complex in its articulation, and moreover made unique by the presence of an extensive noble residence [3]. During the 16th century, a new urban fabric developed around the ancient nucleus built on the top of a rocky spur, which went beyond the medieval walls. The Barco was built, a hunting reserve of about twenty-five hectares enclosed by a wall, populated with game, which would be remodeled according to the noble forms of a villa with a Renaissance garden. The so-called "Bagnaia di fuori" was conceived, the new one (city of the outside), connected to the "Bagnaia di interno" the old one (city of the inside) with a very medieval appearance by a road trident traced on the illustrious Roman prototype of Piazza del Popolo [4].

2. VILLA LANTE AND ITS GARDEN

The construction of Villa Lante began around the beginning of the bishopric of Gambara in Viterbo. The Villa Lante project is attributed to Giacomo Barozzi da Vignola, but the scarcity of written sources makes it difficult for the architect to verify (Figure 1).

The garden, the adjacent park and one of the two buildings were completed in 1578, when Pope Gregory XIII visited Villa Lante [5]. Local architect Tommaso Ghinucci, who worked for one of the previous bishops, Cardinal Niccolò Ridolfi, continued to serve Gambara and carried out the construction of the villa except for the second building. The second building was later built by Carlo Maderno at the behest of Cardinal Alessandro Peretti Montalto. The plan of the Palazzina Gambara is similar to a square divided into nine other small squares, where on the ground floor there is a loggia. The second building also has three large ashlar arches that distinguish a loggia that support the noble floor. The Palazzina Montalto differs from the Gambara for the coats of arms carved in the friezes of the attic; here in fact there are the mountains, in dynastic reference to the Montalts, the branches with pears, in dynastic reference to the Peretti, the eight-pointed mathematical star. In the Palazzina Gambara, as it should be, the shrimp, emblem of the client's surname and a comet with the date of 1578 stand out. Although the two buildings have an interval of about forty years, they are identical in style since both Tommaso Ghinucci and Carlo Maderno have followed the outline of the original project.

A first representation of what the villa looked like is given by a fresco located inside the loggia of the Palazzina Gambara (Figure 2).

The fresco portrays the whole of Villa Lante with the two buildings, the formal garden and the park. You can see the symmetrical structure of the villa with the garden and the two buildings.

This strong axial structure of the garden is represented in another reproduction of Villa Lante (Figure 3).



Fig. 1. View of Villa Lante in Bagnaia with an Italian garden and fountain of the Moors



Fig. 2. Fresco depicting Villa Lante in Bagnaia in the loggia of the Palazzina Gambarà.

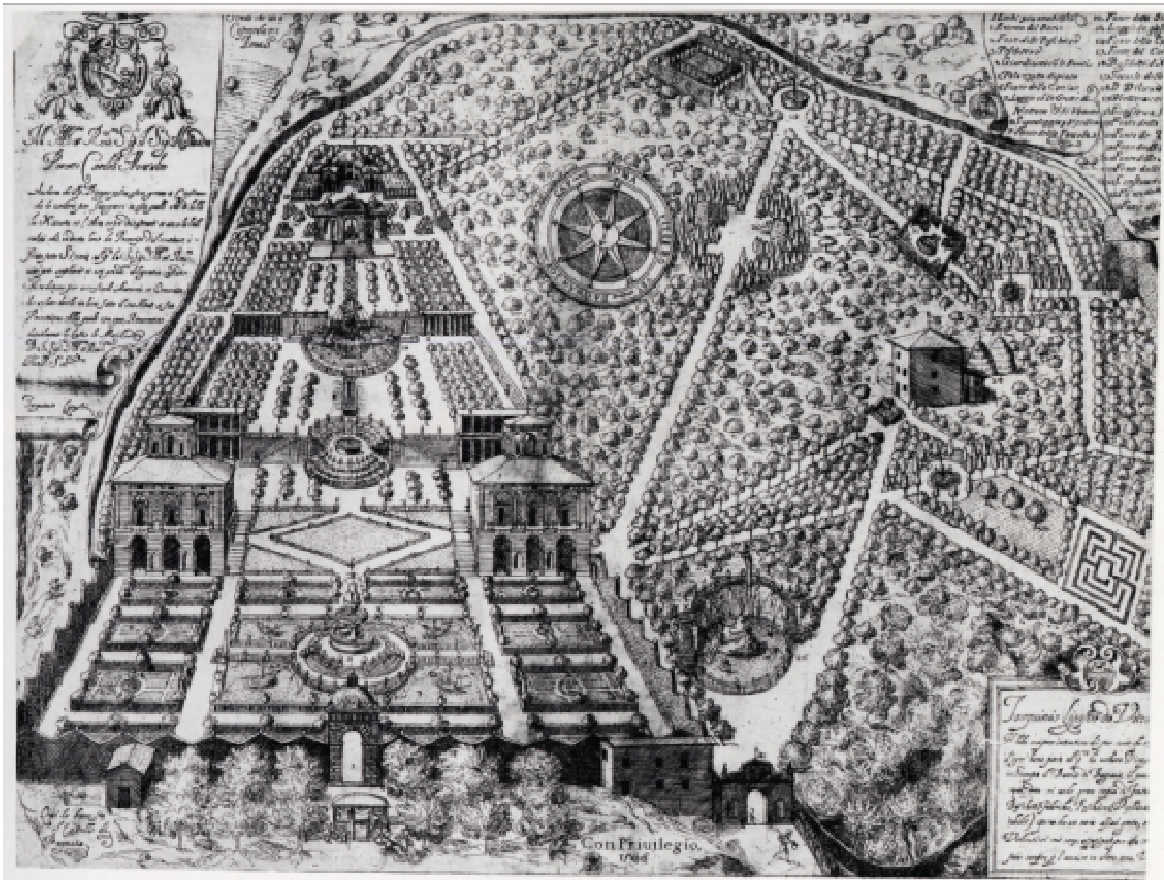
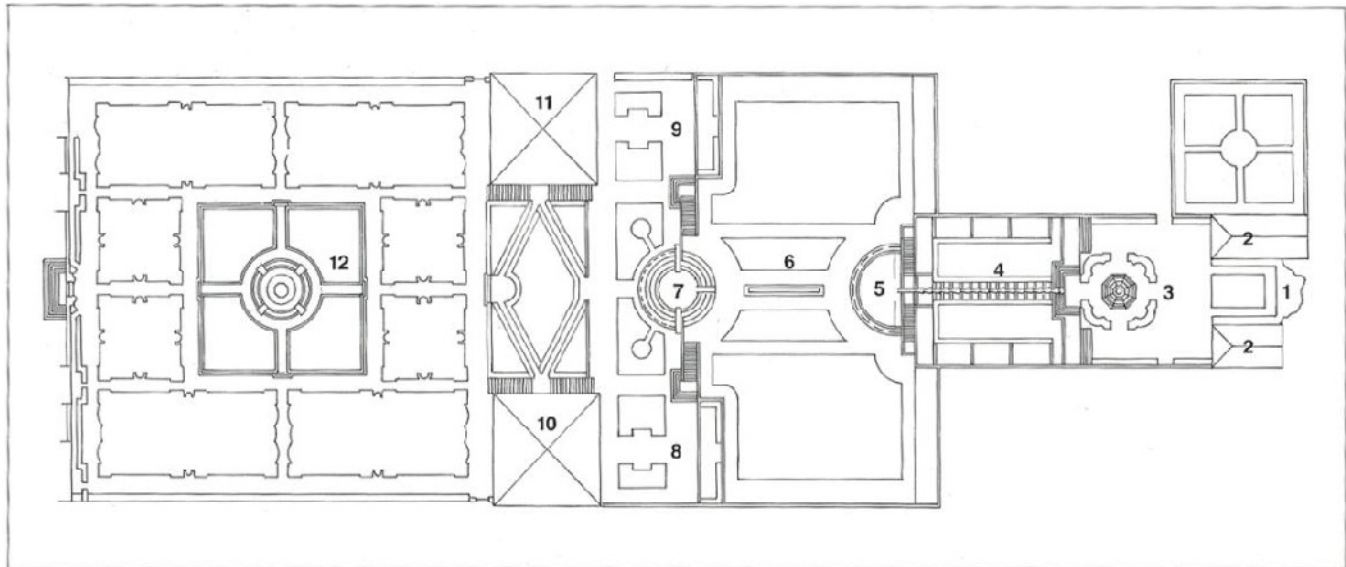


Fig. 3. Tarquinio Ligustri, View of the Villa Lante in Bagnaia, engraving of 1596

It was depicted by Tarquinio Ligustri in the form of an engraving, dated 1596. The engraving was dedicated to Cardinal Montalto, who completed the execution of the original project by hiring Carlo Maderno to build the second building,

the Palazzina Montalto. In the upper right corner of the engraving there is a series of coats of arms with descriptions [6]. Ligustri's engraving provides more detailed and precise information than the original plan of Villa Lante.



- 1 Fountain of the Deluge 2 Lodges of the Muses 3 Fountain of the Dolphins 4 Water chain
5 Fountain of the Rivers 6 Cardinal table 7 Fountain of the Lumini 8 Grotto of Venus
9 Grotto of Neptune 10 Gambara building 11 Montalto building 12 Fountain of the Moors.

Fig. 4. Plan of the Italian garden in Adorni, B., *Villa Lante a Bagnaia: storia e interpretazioni*, in M. Mosser G. Teyssot, *L' Architettura dei Giardini d'Occidente*, Electa, Milan, 1990.

Upstream it is concluded by a retaining wall on which the *Fountain of the Rivers or the Giants* nestles, two colossal statues that personify the Tiber and the Arno, above which the water coming from two crayfish claws falls into the basin below. they are the culmination of the water feature of the upper sloping terrace: *the Water Chain* (Figure 5). To reach it you pass through a pair of stairs resting on the supporting wall, which have parapets called *Balustrades of the vases*, from which jets of water gush. At this level there is the *Water Chain*, a channel raised from the ground and sloping, in which the water flows enclosed by linked volutes.

At an altitude with the buildings, there is a parterre divided into 16 squares (Figure 4), of which the four central ones are used as ponds with the *Fontana dei Mori* in the center. On the second level, connected to the first with fairly steep diagonal ramps, there is the *Fountain of the Cavea or of the Lumini*, round in shape composed of concentric convex and projecting basins in the front half joined by a small platform to the concave rear ones and inserted in the embankment. Through two side stairways

you reach the third terrace crossed in the center by a narrow and long basin called the *Tavola del Cardinale* due to the presence of large lateral edges that surround a central water channel, which have led to suppose its use during banquets outdoors.

It, in addition to ending with the two shrimp claws that overlook the underlying *Fontana dei Fiumi*, presents at the beginning of its path a head of a shrimp, represented in honor of Cardinal Gambara, of whom it is the coat of arms. Upstairs there is the terrace characterized in the center by an octagonal fountain with overlapping pools called the *Dolphin Fountain*. The *Deluge Fountain*, which reproduces a cave and the source of water from where the entire natural path of the fountains begins, acts as a barrier to this last terrace [7]. The passage between the garden, the villa and the park is marked by the monumental *Fontana del Pegaso*, oval in shape, with a high retaining wall on the bottom on which nine busts of Muses are superimposed and with the statue of the winged horse in the center.



Fig. 5. Photo of the the Water Chain

3. CONCLUSIONS

With its twenty-two hectares, between a natural park and a geometricized garden, Villa Lante is defined as the apex of a prototype and the victory of a nature that manages to win over architecture, imposing its own spaces and dictating its own rhythms. The construction is architecture of greenery and is all based on water which occupies the most important space of the entire composition.

Today it is managed by the Ministry for Cultural Heritage and Activities through the Regional Directorate for Museums of the Lazio region.

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