Villa Gamberaia compositional features

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Abstract. The object of the study is Villa Gamberaia in Settignano. This Italian Renaissance villa was created during the 16th century, but its spatial structure differs from its contemporary compositions. In this work, the method of the compositional analysis is used. A complex of compositional techniques characteristic of the early Renaissance gardens has been revealed. These gardens were a vivid illustration of the worldview of humanism, which proclaimed nature as a beautiful, and man as a part of it and a supernatural being. In the garden space, this was achieved by such techniques as terraces organization along the horizontal contours of the relief, which provided a panoramic opening of the garden space to the surrounding landscape; parterre composition of terraces, within which people dominated; contrast of near and far plans. These features are revealed in the construction of the Villa Gamberaia space, which allows us to attribute its composition to the best examples of the early Renaissance.

1. Introduction

Landscape art has always reflected the images of the worldview of historical eras. Changes in the relationship of man and nature, ideas about his place in it, always reflected in the spaces that he created around him. In antiquity, man admired nature, in the Middle Ages was afraid, ashamed, and rejected it as sinful. In the Renaissance, man felt himself at the same time as a part of nature and as a supernatural, spiritual being, endowed with the ability to know and create. If in antiquity, the gods appeared human-like, and then in the Renaissance man became god-like. The concepts of "god", "nature" and "man" got close [1-7].

The ideas of humanism appeared brightly and clearly in the space construction of the villas of the Renaissance, which covers a long two hundred year period [8-18]. During this time, in accordance with the accumulation of scientific knowledge, the worldview changed, the ideas of humanism were transformed. These changes are recorded in the stages - early, high and late Renaissance. These steps are marked in the history of all the arts, excepting the art of gardening. However, the study of compositions of the Renaissance gardens suggests a significant difference in their spatial structure, as an integral characteristic of the era. At the same time, the compositional construction of the garden space does not always coincide with the stereotypical compositions of the time of its creation [8]. In other words, the creation cannot be a decisive indicator of being member-ness to the style. Sometimes that was created later stylistically drawn to earlier times and even expresses it more clearly than its contemporaries.
The purpose of the work is to identify the belonging of the Villa Gamberaia in Settignano to one or another stage in the development of the gardening art of the Renaissance. The research method is the compositional analysis of the spatial organization of the villa.

2. Theoretical part
For many generations, Villa Gamberaia was the perfect example of garden art [12, 15, 17, 19, 20]. As E. Wharton wrote, “a territory barely reaching 3 acres contains almost all the typical perfections of the old Italian garden: free air circulation around the house, abundance of water, a variety of effects due to the skillful use of various levels and, finally, the width and simplicity of the composition" [21].

Villa Gamberaia received her name from the first of the owner's sequence, Matteo Gambarelli, for whom it was built at the beginning of the 16th century. His sons Bernardo and Giovanni worked as architects under the name Rossellini (Bernardo is the author of the Piccolomini Palace in Pienza) [15, 22, 23].

At the beginning of the XVII century, these possessions passed to Zenobi Lappi, after his death the estate was inherited by nephews - Jacopo and Andrea. Andrea provided a good supply of water to the garden, buying up nearby springs and buying the right to bring water to the garden from neighboring lands. He passionately wanted to make fountains, but in 1636, his neighbor brought him to trial, because he had deprived her villa of water supply. After the death of Andrea in 1688, the villa was confiscated to cover the debts. In 1717, Gamberaia passed to the Caponi family, and thanks to their efforts and concerns, the villa acquired a modern look. The name of the architect is unknown, and the engraving of Zocci, made between 1735 and 1750 - the first image of the garden (Figure 1). At the end of the 19th century, the princess of Serbia, Jika, bought a villa and lived there with her companion, Miss Blood. The construction of the water parterre refers to this period. As they say, when the princess decided to become a monk, she left the villa only early at dawn to swim in the parterre ponds, and after dark, to walk along the garden paths [18, 20-22].

![Figure 1. The first image of the villa.](image_url)
Figure 2. Plan: 1-entrance, 2-casino, 3-terrace, 4-loggia, 5-water parterre, 6-green exedra, 7-hanging or secret garden, 8-lemon garden, 9-bosco, 10-nympheum.

During the Second World War, Gamberaia was actually bombed. Signor Marcello Marchi decided to restore the house and gardens in its original form. For a long time, the garden was famous, so numerous old prints, plans and photographs could guide him.

The spatial structure of the villa is three levels, "carved" in the hillside: the lower entrance with the house, terrace and water parterre; the middle one is with bosko and the upper one, where the lemon garden is located. However, this is not all the plastic richness of the villa. Below the entrance level, the groves on the slope that descends to Florence, above, are also groves that climb up the slope. All these levels are a common and very expressive geoplastic composition created by a man-creator.

The planning structure of the Villa Gamberaia, with an area of 1.2 hectares, includes a parterre garden, a hanging garden and a Bosco (grove) (Figure 2). The building of the villa stands in the middle of the lower terrace, which is the main compositional space. On one side, the terrace is flanked almost entirely by buildings, on the other side it is covered by a high retaining wall, on which are located upper terraces with a hanging garden and a lemon garden. Along the retaining wall, there is an alley, which is closed off from the north by a nymphaeum, shaded by ancient cypress trees. Opposite the villa building is a hanging garden, closed on three sides by the supporting wall of the upper terrace (Figure 3). Four flights of steps, framed by a balustrade, decorated with vases with flowers and sculpted busts, link the hanging garden with a lemon garden on one side and Bosco (a grove) on the other. The grove is planted with cypress trees, decorated with statues and stone benches [23-27].

In front of the house on the south side, there is a ground floor part, fenced with a low parapet from the south and west, which fully expresses the “program” of the Renaissance (Figure 4). The construction of this main part of the whole garden is subordinated to the longitudinal axis, along which a narrow path is laid, revealed by the location of the sequence of fountains on it. On either side of it are four rectangular reservoirs, which form the center of the axial composition - a water parterre, framed by a trimmed border and flowerbeds. The compositional axis from the south is complete by a semicircular reservoir and a sheared green semicircular arcade, combining the composition of the parterre (Figure 5). On the west side of the villa building there is a terrace, enclosed by a low parapet, decorated with small sculptures of dogs and lions. From here, there is a magnificent panorama of the agricultural landscape and Florence with the dome of the Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore (Figure 6).

Laconic shapes and home decor dictated the simplicity and clarity of the regular forms of the parterre garden, which was a kind of horizontal reflection of the facade plastics. The predominance of man was emphasized by the fact that low clipped shrubs participated in the spatial organization of the garden terraces. In general, the garden was distinguished by ease of proportions, elegant simplicity of form. Its spaces were airy, open, and commensurate with man and calmly and freely flowed along the terraces of the slope. The comfort, narrow perspectives directed down the hill did not cut across longitudinal-axial compositions of the terraces. The gaze did not break down, but easily slid along horizontal lines, soaring beyond the borders of the garden and creating a feeling of stability, peace and
The spatial organization of the early Renaissance gardens was intended to emphasize the importance and greatness of man. The villa, located on the terraces of the hill, the house and the garden, raised above the surrounding nature, seemed to claim a person in the position of a “supernatural” creature, creating a spectacular “soaring” of his space. The feeling was intensified by the fact that the usual and traditional method of separating the walls of the inner garden at the house from the environment was destroyed. Terrace compositions not only opened into outer space, but existing physical boundaries — not walls, but fences, became so low that they satisfied only security considerations, but they did not in any way cover the surrounding landscape. Thus, a wide panorama of the surrounding space was included in the horizontal compositions of the terraces. Here the house and, in the philosophical sense, the man “controlled” not only the parterre garden, which was laid out in front of him, but also the “panorama” of the surrounding landscapes. The location of the villa on the hill created an extremely spectacular isolation of the garden space and the remoteness of the surrounding landscape, shrouded in a bluish-milky haze of aerial perspective recently discovered in painting. This turned the garden into a materialized copy of the masterpieces of painting, where the aerial perspective served (as in the gardens) not only as a pictorial technique for contrasting plans, but also exaggerated the greatness of man in nature. The contrast of the plans was enhanced by the arrangement of bright flowering plants in vases of the parapet on the bluish background of the Tuscan landscape [8].

Figure 3. The hanging (secret) garden.  
Figure 4. Casino.  
Figure 5. Water parterre and green exedra.  
Figure 6. View from the terrace on Florence.
The named techniques in total are characteristic precisely for the period of the early Renaissance, the period of charm with fresh ideas of humanism [25]. Later, when confronted with reality, "the shoe was wrung along the foot." The gardens of the High Renaissance were "turned" perpendicularly to the contours of the relief, limiting communication with the external environment — a wide panorama was replaced by a narrow fragment of the panorama. Hiding from the environment, the gardens have gained a more cohesive internal structure. The compositional axes along the contour lines were subordinated to and combined with the main compositional axis, perpendicular to them. This axis was emphasized by the location of a sequence of water devices, sculptures on it and ended with the parterre composition of the lower terrace and a narrow fragment of the panorama of the city or the surrounding landscape. The chamber of the early Renaissance villas was replaced by the high pomp.

It was during the high Renaissance period that Villa Gamberaia was created. As in almost any work of such respectable age, in its composition one can find traces of different times and styles. For example, bulengrin (the lawn path, leading to nymphaeum), as well as the ordinary planting of rhododendrons along it, are much younger, they are typical of the gardens of the XVIII - XIX centuries. However, the spatial organization of the Villa Gamberaia in general and the complex of applied compositional techniques make it possible to consider it one of the best examples of garden ensembles of the early Renaissance period.

3. Conclusions
The gardens of the early Renaissance, of course, the result and one of the best illustrations of the ideas of humanism, namely the understanding that a person can not only passively adapt to nature, but also decorate it with his works, consciously using certain qualities, forcing him to serve the expression his ideas. They triumphantly assert that the labor of human hands, inspired by knowledge and aesthetic vision, harmoniously fits into nature, giving the highest pleasure. In addition, courage, innovation of their compositions, along with other phenomena of cultural life, indicate a transition of thinking from the medieval miniature to a cosmic universal scale.

The terrace garden is not a feature of the Renaissance; it is a consequence of the relief of the area. In hilly Italy, the gardens were built on terraces in antiquity and in the following post-Renaissance era. However, the composition of the terraced garden was decided at different times in different ways. The dimensions of the terraces and the proportions of their spaces, the frequency and height of the vertical divisions varied. The relationship with the environment has changed: the degree of openness and the way the surrounding landscape is incorporated into the garden composition; the compositional relation to the slope changed: a subordinate to a natural basis, the construction along horizontals or the development of composition opposed to it across the topography, characteristic of high and late Renaissance. Finally, the plasticity of architectural forms changed, in accordance with the style of the era.

The compositional methods of space organization, used in the Villa Gamberaia in Settignano described above, express the ideals put forward by humanism, which are characteristic in the aggregate only for the early Renaissance stage. Their application and development can be traced both to the rank-and-file and to the best works of landscape art of the early Renaissance.

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