

Books

Le delizie ritrovate: Poggioreale e la villa del Rinascimento nella Napoli aragonese. By Paola Modesti. 242 pp. incl. 15 col. + 49 b. & w. ills. (Olschki, Florence, 2014), €34. ISBN 978-88-222-6274-5.

Reviewed by RICHARD SCHOFIELD

THE GREAT VILLA of Poggioreale in Naples, designed by Giuliano da Maiano for Alfonso of Aragon and constructed from 1487 onwards, was often illustrated in part or whole from the time of Peruzzi onwards, but, owing to its progressive destruction from 1528, many aspects of the complex have remained obscure. In an exceptional book, Paola Modesti presents a clear and exhaustive study of the villa and its estate starting from two newly found sources. The first is her discovery – one of the most remarkable finds in decades – in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, of plans, elevations and sections made for the 3rd Earl of Bute in around 1770. These reconstruct the villa and Modesti tentatively attributes them to Carlo Vanvitelli on the grounds of similarities with other drawings of Palazzo Reale and Palazzo Donn'Anna in Naples, although this remains unconfirmed as a number of Vanvitelli's drawings are inaccessible. The author and her collaborators present computer recreations of the villa and nymphaeum (perhaps a *triclinium*?) on the basis of these drawings.

The second source is *Le cose volgari di messer Augustino Landulfo* (1536), which is valuable for reconstructing the gardens with their great variety of plants, *ambulationes*, fountains and fish-pond. Landulfo's account postdates the partial destruction of the gardens, and Modesti wonders if it was based on Marcantonio Michiel's lost account of the villa (1519) mentioned by Serlio, although it is possible that Michiel would have said more about the villa itself. She examines the villa from every possible point of view: its function, decoration, layout and the water sources, the architect, Giuliano da Maiano, and other possible contributors to its design, including Giuliano da Sangallo, Francesco di Giorgio, Fra Giocondo and Luca Fancelli, as well as the important humanists and poets (Pontano, Summonte and Sannazaro) who could have contributed directly and indirectly to the evolution of the ideas behind it.

Perhaps only the elevation of the villa was designed by Giuliano da Maiano, with the sunken courtyard contributed by Giuliano da Sangallo (not documented at Poggioreale, however) since the latter included a similar courtyard in his project of 1488 for a palace

for Ferdinando, King of Naples: the form may have been suggested by the ancient 'Baths of Trajan' at Pozzuoli. The main block owes much to the Cascine di Tavola and the villa at Poggio a Caiano outside Florence (corner towers, quoins, Latin cross mullioned windows), but the great basement arcade is absent. Modesti rightly denies the relevance for the project of Castel del Monte or Islamic gardens in Spain, which nobody could have seen before 1492. The courtyard included decorated roundels, and the author overlooks a possible source for these: Palazzo Pazzi Quaratesi in Florence.

The villa looks like an isolated unit to which the other buildings had been added – the nymphaeum, the kitchen building and the great loggia in front of the orange garden with statues of Adam and Eve in the centre – and may have been projected by other architects, as Maiano died in 1490. The wonderful kitchen-chimney, absurdly out-of-scale, looks like the handiwork of Francesco di Giorgio, who drew such chimneys in imitation of an ancient example at Baia. Equally full are the discussions of possible parallels and precursors for great hunting lodges (the Visconti castle at Pavia; Filarete's description of a hunting lodge, which was certainly known in Naples) and of the usual ancient sources for villas, which yield fascinating details. One example is the aviary at Poggio, with its cages for different types of birds, that may have intentionally recalled that of the Roman scholar Varro at Cassino. The depth of interest in ancient Roman *mores* is illustrated by the diners at a meal in another Neapolitan palace in 1490 who lay down (*prostrati*) to eat, presumably in imitation of the Roman *accubatio*. Occasionally Modesti's analyses do not produce decisive results (the long treatment of earlier quattrocento villas and of Fra Giocondo in particular), but they present all possible materials for future research with considerable erudition. Lord Bute amused himself by having buildings drawn while he was en route from Venice (where 102 drawings were made for him!) to Mantua, Genoa, Florence, Rome and Naples. Let us hope that many of these unpublished drawings are as interesting as those presented in this remarkable study.

Owning the Past: Why the English Collected Antique Sculpture 1640–1840.

By Ruth Guilding. 410 pp. incl. 100 col. + 200 b. & w. ills. (Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2014), £55. ISBN 978-0-300-20819-1.

Reviewed by TODD LONGSTAFFE-GOWAN

IN JOSEPH SPENCE'S *Polymetis: or, an Enquiry concerning the Agreement between the works of the Roman Poets, and the Remains of the Antient Artists* (1755), the eponymous narrator proclaims that his principal view in making a collection of classical art was 'to compare the



40. Charles Townley in his sculpture gallery, by Johann Zoffany. 1782. Canvas, 127 by 102 cm. (Townley Hall, Burnley).

descriptions and expressions in the Roman poets that in any way relate to the imaginary beings, with the works that remain to us of the old artists; and to please myself with the mutual lights they might give each to the other'. While it was, he continued, possible in Rome to enjoy 'the convenience of a sort of contemporary comments on Virgil and Horace, in the nobler remains of the antient statuaries and painters', those who, like himself, 'lie so far north from this last great seat of empire [. . .] are placed out of reach of consulting these finer remains of antiquity so much, and so frequently, as one could wish'.

Guilding's erudite and handsome book has its origin in *Marble mania: Sculpture Galleries in England 1640–1840* (2001), which accompanied an exhibition she conceived and curated that year at Sir John Soane's Museum, London. Her interest lies in the British collectors' infatuation with the antique – or, in her own words, in 'the pride in acquisition, possession, provenance, and posterity, as well as hierarchy and cultural snobbery' associated with the collecting and display of antique sculpture.

Guilding's narrative begins with an analysis of the obsessive collecting habits of Thomas Howard, 14th Earl of Arundel (1585–1646), whose love affair with antique statuary was ignited and fuelled by imperial aspirations and the allure of the warm South. Arundel set the stage for generations of English collectors: he was among the first to 'converse with the ancients' and among the earliest subscribers to the Grand Tour – a practice that was to become a rite of passage for male scions of the British aristocracy and gentry, and which resulted inexorably in the association of classical and Neo-classical sculpture with a socially and culturally privileged way of travelling and interpreting the world.

Few things during the period from 1640 to 1840 evoke more vividly the remote classical past and the classical ideal than antique marble