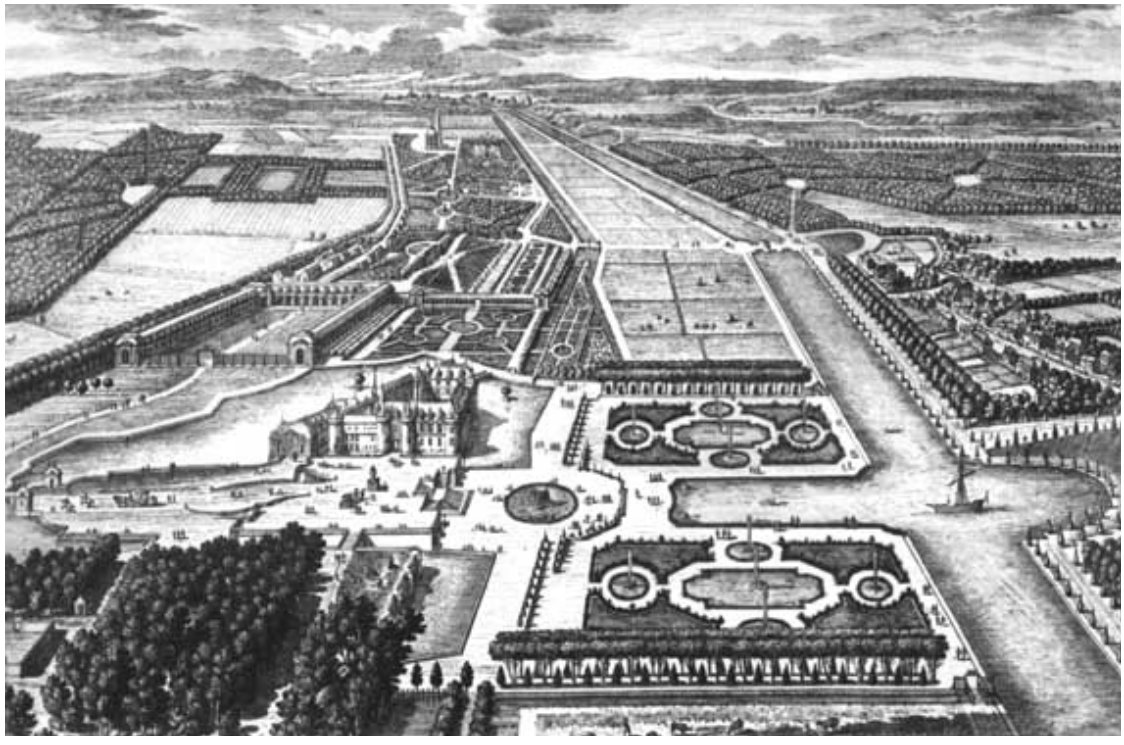


5.17. Chantilly. Engraving from *Recueil des Veues des Plus Beaux Lieux de France* by Adam and Nicholas Pérelle, 1688

to local conditions and taste. It is a style that is still influential, as can be seen in some of the gardens of the American landscape architects Dan Kiley and Peter Walker, for example. It can also be observed in France itself, where the recently built Parc Citroën in Paris shows how its enduring principles can be translated into a contemporary idiom.

II. The Garden as Theater: Italian Baroque and Rococo Gardens

The austere harmonies of French classicism never penetrated very deeply into the Italian design ethos. The seventeenth-century Italian style, like that of Le Nôtre, was an integrative one in which individual parts were organized into a unified composition. But instead of achieving compositional unity with authoritarian axes flung down along lines apparently extending into infinity, the builders of Italian gardens—often encouraged by topography—wove dramatic hanging terraces and ornamental flights of stairs into hillsides to produce theatrical arrangements of landscape. The dramatic potential of moving water continued to be exploited in the construction of elaborate sculptural cascades like the one at Villa Lante (see fig. 4.25). Unlike French garden designers, whose struggles to furnish water to their fountains, pools, and cascades were herculean and often intensely frustrating as well as wasteful both of capital and human lives, Italian architects were more fortunate in their ability to convey water to their sites in copious quantities, albeit also at the expense of much backbreaking labor and often intense politics. Their gardens were vehicles for princely pomp and display, and the glorification of their patrons became ever more explicit as decorative coats of arms and other family emblems were prominently featured instead of being merely encoded symbolically into the landscape.[18]

Not only were dramatic astonishment and theatrical perspective effectively used in the layout of Italian Baroque gardens, but also many of the gardens of this period contained actual outdoor theaters with a grassy stage, hedges for wings, and sometimes, peeping forth from the greenery, terra-cotta figures representing stock characters of the *commedia dell'arte* tradition popularized by troupes of Italian actors since the second half of the sixteenth century (fig. 5.18). Pastoral drama was echoed in the sculptural Satyrs and Pans that populated garden woods or the edges of garden walks, as well as in the taste for genre figures of peasants engaged in a variety of tasks.

Italian designers probably found the Cartesian paradigm of non-place-specific axial planning less congenial than one that recognized place as particular and bounded. This may be explained by the fact that the topography throughout much of Italy is hilly, thereby promoting greater opportunity visually for spatial enclosure than for spatial extension. In

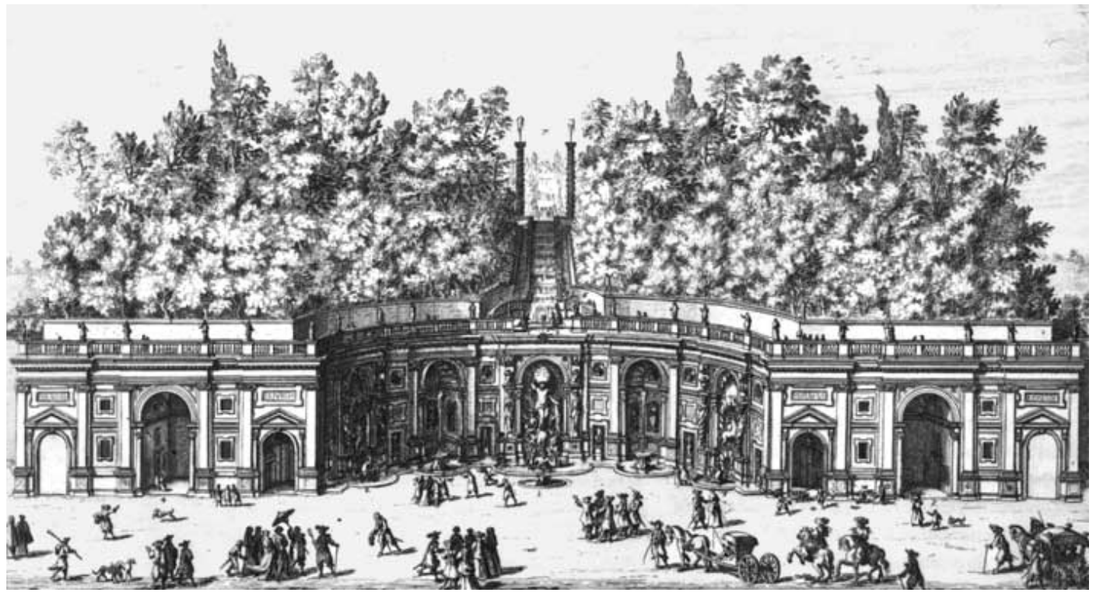
5.18. Green theater with *commedia dell'arte* terra-cotta figures, Villa Marlia, near Lucca, Italy

***Below:* 5.19. Water Theater with spiral pillars, and Cascade in the background, Villa Aldobrandini, Frascati, Italy. Designed by Giacomo della Porta, Carlo Maderno, and Giovanni Fontana. 1601–1621. Engraving by Giovanni Battista Falda, from *Le Fontane delle Ville di Frascati*. Atlas stands beneath the cascade carrying a celestial globe signifying divine wisdom. Originally a figure of Hercules (now gone) assisted Atlas. Similarly, Cardinal Aldobrandini wished to be seen as helping Pope Clement VIII to uphold Christian truth.**

addition, Italian designers were more likely to retain, however unconsciously, the concept of *topos*—the philosophical notion of emplacement derived from Aristotle—because it was already abundantly manifested in the antique classical landscape tradition to which they were heirs. Although much larger than their Italian Renaissance counterparts, on the whole, Italian gardens in the seventeenth century were more intimately scaled than those of contemporary France, and though axes might dissolve into nature, they did not appear to extend into the indefinite distance as if to meet the line of the horizon. In conservative Tuscany, this observation holds true to an even greater degree. A predilection for comparatively simple familial pastimes resulted in relatively small gardens composed of well-proportioned "rooms" of greenery. One French feature, the *parterre de broderie,* did gain popularity. By the end of the seventeenth century, it had mostly replaced the geometric compartments of traditional *parterres.*

Villa Aldobrandini

By the mid-sixteenth century, nepotism had become thoroughly institutionalized within the Catholic Church, and it was common practice for a pope to appoint a nephew as cardinal to serve in the capacity of trusted assistant during his pontificate. The cardinal-nephew thereby became a strong candidate to succeed him at a later date. At the very least, the influence of this relative as a member of the Church establishment would perpetuate the prestige and wealth of the papal family. Papal villa gardens and those created by the cardinal-nephews were therefore opulent essays in power politics.



Frascati, a hillside town outside of Rome, was famed, like Tivoli, as a locale of the *villeggiatura,* the annual summertime retreat to the country from the heat of the city. It gained prominence after the election of Pope Clement VIII in 1592, when his nephew Cardinal Pietro Aldobrandini undertook at great expense the introduction of water from the Molara Springs on Monte Algido. The provision of a waterworks allowed the construction of an impressive cascade and magnificent water theater at the villa he built for himself and his uncle. The architect Carlo Maderno (c. 1556–1629), assisted by the fountain engineer Giovanni Fontana, was responsible for this impressive design.

The relaxed, ample, architectonic muscularity of this garden sequence epitomizes the Italian Baroque garden style. The architectural robustness and play of light and shade characteristic of the period are particularly evident in the semicircular arcaded water theater facing the ground floor of the villa (fig. 5.19). Its sculptural decor displays the naturalistic character, compositional arrangement into counterbalanced diagonals, and thrusting movement into space that we associate with Baroque art in general. The iconographic program, however, is still allusively symbolic—a late example of the humanistic message-garden (figs. 5.20–5.21).

***Far left:* 5.20. Polyphemus, Water Theater, Villa Aldobrandini. This figure and that of a centaur (fig. 5.21) illustrate a common humanist theme: the struggle of reason over bestiality.**

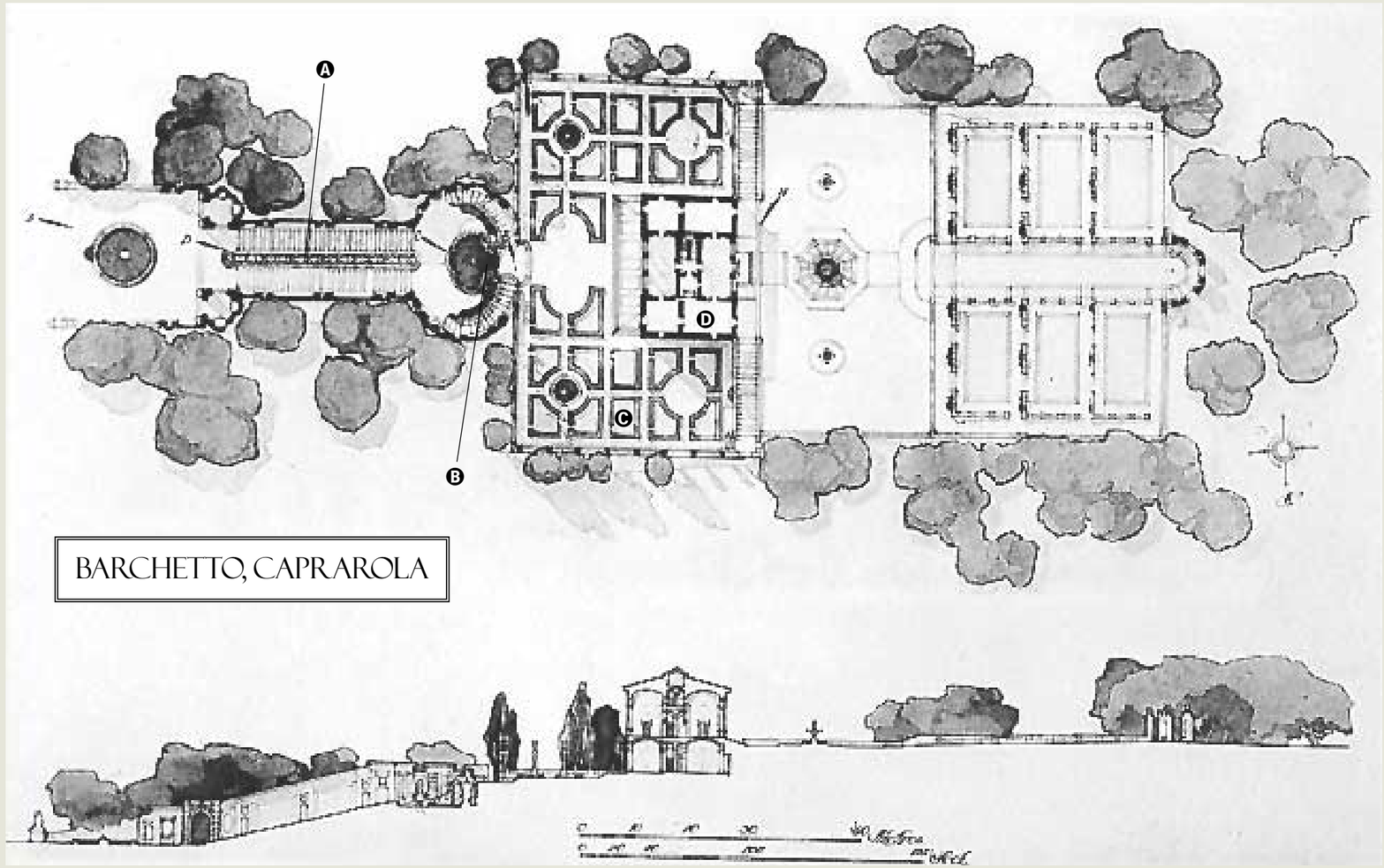
***Left:* 5.21. Centaur figure, Water Theater, Villa Aldobrandini**

The Farnese Gardens at Caprarola and on the Palatine Hill, Rome

At Caprarola, near Viterbo, in the first third of the sixteenth century, Cardinal Alessandro Farnese had commissioned Antonio da Sangallo the Younger (1483–1546) to build a fortified palace, a huge pentagonal building with bastions. In 1556, with fear of renewed Spanish invasion diminishing, the cardinal commissioned the architect Vignola to transform his fortress into a summer villa. It has been saved for discussion here because the additions, which were made around 1620 by Girolamo Rainaldi (1570–1655), illustrate the evolution of Italian garden design from a metaphorical fusion of art and nature within the context of a carefully conceived humanistic iconography into a more purely aesthetic architectural statement.

Caprarola's significance in the history of landscape design lies in the creation of the Barchetto, a secluded retreat with a *casino* and herm-guarded *giardino segreto* approached by a quarter-mile-long path leading through the woods from the summer garden next to the palace (figs. 5.22–5.25). It was built five years after Vignola's death in 1573, probably according to the design of Giacomo del Duca. Its design as a series of descending terraces built into a hillside, its fountain flanked by reclining river gods, and its curvilinear *catena d'acqua,* or water cascade, imitate Vignola's achievement at Bagnaia.

The Barchetto at Caprarola, created in two epochs of garden building—with its original form echoing Vignola's design at the Villa Lante and its later additions by Rainaldi—provides a unique and



5.22. Plan of Barchetto, Caprarola. Designed by Giacomo Barozzi da Vignola, Giacomo del Duca, and Girolamo Rainaldi. 1556–1620. Drawing by J. C. Shepherd and G. A. Jellicoe, from *Italian Gardens of the Renaissance,* 1925

One approaches the Barchetto today on the same fir-lined path, passing through woods of chestnut, beech, ilex, and holm oak, as did Cardinal Farnese when he wished to enjoy the privacy of the *casino* he had built for summer dining. It is pleasantly surprising to encounter the first of a series of terraces carved into this woodland setting. Here one finds a circular fountain basin above which rises a beautiful water chain modeled on that at the Villa Lante (fig. 5.23; Ⓐ). This is composed of pairs of wriggling dolphins, and the playful effect of the water's undulations as it slips over the scalloped basins between the dolphins is similar to the shimmering flow between the curvilinear borders describing an elongated crayfish of Cardinal Gambara's water channel. Here the gentle cascade is bordered by ramps leading up to a piazza, where river gods recline on either side of a huge vase-shaped fountain Ⓑ. From this, jets of water patterned to form the Farnese lily spill water into a basin below (fig. 5.25). Curving ramps lead up to the *giardino segreto* Ⓒ and the *casino* Ⓓ. The *casino* has a double loggia at its base and a single loggia above where the *piano nobile* opens onto an upper terrace. These are the main components of the sixteenth-century Barchetto.

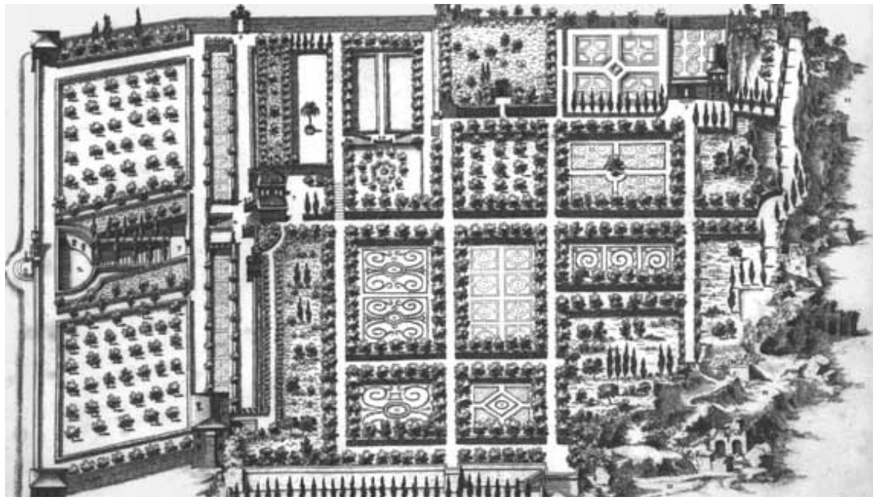
The seventeenth-century additions by Rainaldi exploit the architectural character and dramatic potential of the original scheme. Large torsos of Prudence and Silence, as these figures are known, were mounted on grand carved double pedestals in front of the sixteenth-century walls outlining the sides of the first terrace, adding theatrical intensity and an augmented air of mystery to the space. Boldly scaled rusticated pavilions set between the outer sloping walls on either side of the circular pool and the inner walls, which also slope upward as they define the edges of the twin ramps beside the water chain, give additional architectonic power to the composition. At the piazza of the Vase Fountain, along the curving wall embracing the stairs that lead to the terrace above, forcefully articulated rusticated pilasters framing niches of rough stonework have replaced the sixteenth-century surface, which was probably decorated with stucco reliefs. Also part of the seventeenth-century revision are copies of large antique heads set into the niches and upon the scrolling brackets that ornament the curving walls of rough, banded stonework.

Ascending the stairs one enters the *giardino segreto.* Here the seventeenth-century planners gave a more powerful spatial definition to the sixteenth-century garden by substituting large herms with expressive faces and gestures for the globe finials that originally decorated the perimeter parapet (fig. 5.24). The vases on their heads give a uniform "cornice line" to the green room of box compartments they preside over, thereby increasing the architectural character of the space. In contrast to Vignola's summer and winter gardens adjacent to the palace below, where grottoes, fountains, and classical figures furnished a specific symbolism, there is no special iconographic message to decode here; the herms, believed to be the work of Pietro Bernini (1562–1629), are satyric gods gathered in an ordered clearing within the wild woodland, allusive only of the mysterious life forces present in an enchanted spot.

5.23. *Catena d'acqua,* Caprarola

Below: 5.24. *Giardino segreto* and stairway with a water banister of stone dolphins, Caprarola

5.25. River gods and Vase Fountain, Caprarola



5.26. Farnese Gardens, Palatine, Rome. Designed by Giacomo Barozzi da Vignola, Giacomo del Duca, and Girolamo Rainaldi. Late 1560s–1618. Engraving by Giovanni Battista Falda, from *Li Giardini di Roma*, c. 1670

***Below:* 5.27. Aviary, Farnese Gardens, Palatine, Rome. c. 1618–33. Engraving by Giovanni Battista Falda, from *Li Giardini di Roma*, c. 1670**

beautiful example of the transformation of Italian Renaissance landscape design into innovative Baroque expression. Rainaldi's robust architecture and the use of high staircase walls and large-scale sculpture to control movement and shape space in a plastic and dynamic way constitute new developments in the course of landscape design history.

One thinks today of Italian gardens primarily in terms of architectural stone and greenery, forgetting the once-important role of flowers. The *giardino segreto* of the Farnese palace at Caprarola as well as the one in front of the *casino* and the large terrace garden behind it were originally filled with exotic flowers. From old records, we know that several kinds of roses, marigolds, violets, lilies, crocuses, hyacinths, and narcissi, as well as fruit trees—oranges, pomegranates, citrons—grew in these gardens.[19] The Farnese pope, Paul III (papacy 1534–1549), was avidly interested in botany, an enthusiasm that was continued by his grandson, Cardinal Alessandro Farnese, as well as by the cardinal's nephew and heir, Cardinal Odoardo Farnese. Indeed, the scientific interest in botany, a development of the Renaissance, was given new impetus in the seventeenth century, an age of exploration and discovery, when plants from the Americas and Asia were eagerly sought by many wealthy collectors and by botanical gardens, such as those founded at Padua in 1545 and Leiden in 1587. It is not therefore surprising to find in Rome a famous early botanical collection of the wealthy Farnese family, begun in the sixteenth century and continued throughout the seventeenth.

The Farnese Gardens built atop the Palatine in Rome over the ruins of the palaces of the emperors Tiberius and Domitian were created by various members of the great Farnese family including Pope Paul III, Cardinal Alessandro,[20] and Cardinal Odoardo Farnese (fig. 5.26). They span the same period from the late Renaissance to the end of the seventeenth century as the successive stages of the Farnese gardens at Caprarola and were probably designed by the same architects—Giacomo Barozzi da Vignola, Giacomo del Duca, and Girolamo Rainaldi. They constituted a renowned center for plant propagation and exhibition until archaeologists digging the ruins of imperial Rome in the eighteenth century destroyed them.[21]

Several flights of stairs lead to an upper terrace where the main axis is punctuated by a fern-encrusted water theater set between the bases of twin aviaries and flanked by a pair of staircases leading up to gardens on the crest of the Palatine (fig. 5.27). The aviaries, which were completed in the first third of the seventeenth century, still stand, but the elaborate gardens that lay beyond them exist only as a partial, pleasing but not historical, twentieth-century design amid the archaeological excavations.

Country Retreats of the Roman Aristocracy: Villa Borghese and Villa Pamphili

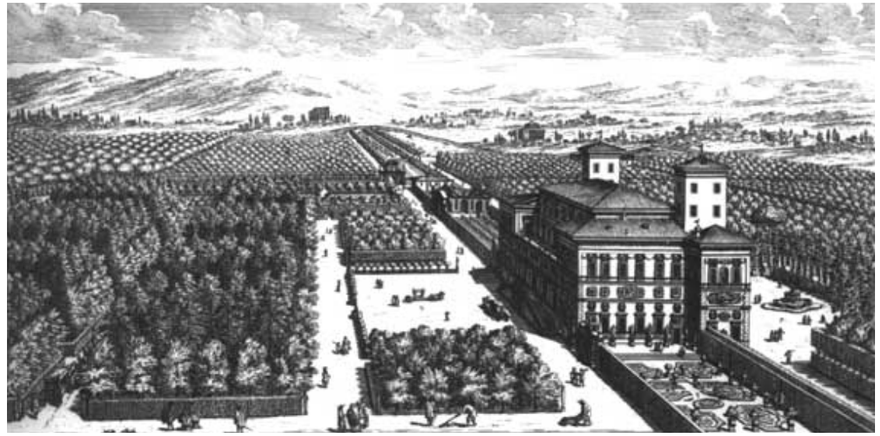
Two of the great estates within Rome assembled by princes of the Church between the last years of the sixteenth century and the end of the seventeenth—Villa Borghese and Villa Pamphili—today serve as popular public parks. Two other important gardens, Villa Montalto and Villa Ludovisi, were destroyed in the nineteenth century, the former to accommodate the train terminal and rail yards next to the Baths of Diocletian and the latter to profit speculators in the new housing market that was created when Rome became a national capital following the reunification of Italy.

When Cardinal Camillo Borghese became Pope Paul V (papacy 1605–1621), he promptly conferred a cardinalate upon his nephew Scipione Caffarelli, thereafter known as Cardinal Borghese. The new cardinal and his relatives soon began amassing land for a large suburban estate, or *vigna,* on the Pincian Hill just outside the northern walls of the city. Family pride, sporting pleasure, and aesthetic delight motivated the design of their villa in the early years of the seventeenth century. Although suffering today from insufficient maintenance—like many Italian public parks—the gardens of the Villa Borghese remain a popular amenity for modern Romans, and its art galleries constitute a museum of international renown. The casino designed by Flaminio Ponzio (1560–1613), with its extensive decoration completed by the Flemish architect Jan van Santen (Giovanni Vasanzio), was conceived as a close cousin of the nearby Villa Medici both in plan and in the heavy ornamentation of its exterior walls (stripped of their sculpture by Napoleon).

When completed, the Borghese Gardens consisted of three separate enclosures, or *recinti* (fig. 5.28). The first *recinto* was a *bosco* of regular *boschetti* (compartments of trees) planted in the 1620s in front of the villa. This section was accessible to the public. A second *recinto,* which was reserved for the private use of the family, lay behind the villa. It was planted with groves of holm oak. The third *recinto* consisted of a well-stocked game park on the irregular lands to the north. Between the first and second *recinti,* the villa was constructed, with an intimately scaled private garden—*giardino segreto*—placed on either side of it. High walls surrounded the entire estate.

The wall that originally screened the two *giardini segreti* from the transverse avenue running in front of the villa was torn down during the nineteenth-century modernization in the English style. The condition of these small gardens today is considerably altered from that of the seventeenth century, when they were filled with espaliered citrus trees, free-standing orange trees, and, in the springtime, masses of exotic bulbs. Gone, too, are the birds that sang in copper-netted cages in the twin aviaries that still stand in the northern garden. Beyond the aviaries, which were probably inspired by those of the Farnese Gardens atop the Palatine, is the Meridiana, a sundial.

Aesthetic and sensual pleasures motivated the creation of the Villa Borghese. Art collecting, social entertainment, and hunting were the principal purposes it served. Sculpture was used decoratively in its application to the villa facades and throughout the garden. To understand the change that took place in Italian villa design between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, one can compare the siting of the Villa Borghese with that of the nearby Villa Giulia. As at the Villa Aldobrandini, the Villa Giulia and its garden are powerfully united through axial composition (see fig. 4.12). The Borghese Villa, on the other hand, is not the principal organizing force and focus of axial planning, but simply one element within a broader landscape composition. The landscape itself is treated



5.28. Villa Borghese, Rome, Italy. Main gateway and casino designed by Flaminio Ponzio. 1609–1617, with decoration by Giovanni Vasanzio. Gardens laid out beginning in 1608. Engraving by Simone Felice, from *Li Giardini di Roma,* c. 1670

5.29. Villa Pamphili, Rome, Italy. Casino designed by Alessandro Algardi. Casino and gardens built 1644–48. Engraving by Simone Felice, from *Li Giardini di Roma,* c. 1670

***Below:* 5.30. *Giardini segreti,* Villa Pamphili**

in a less particular, more loosely articulated fashion than those of earlier gardens. In all these ways, the Villa Borghese announces its participation in a new era of Italian landscape design.

The tenets of this later style are further illustrated in the Villa Pamphili, atop the Janiculum Hill in Rome. In 1640, Camillo Pamphili increased the size of the *vigna* he had inherited from his father at that location by acquiring another one adjacent to it. Then, upon the election of his uncle as Pope Innocent X in 1644, Camillo was chosen to fill the cardinal-nephew position. Although in 1647 he was permitted to resign his cardinalate in order to perpetuate the Pamphili family by marrying Olimpia Aldobrandini, land purchases continued until 1673, when, under his son, the *vigna* reached its ultimate size of 240 acres.

Begun in 1644, the beautiful *casino,* tall, compact, and richly decorated with sculpture and frescoes in the manner of the Villa Borghese, was completed by 1648. Like the Villa Borghese, its primary function was as an art gallery and a place for social entertainment. There were no bedrooms, as the family residence lay a short distance to the west on the Via Aurelia. Although the plan of the *casino* was traversed by two of the several wide axes dividing the grounds into a notably regular composition, the elegant structure was not a focal point in the overall design of the gardens (fig. 5.29).

The low *parterres de broderie* of the *giardini segreti* next to the villa show French influence on later Italian garden design (fig. 5.30). The transformation of the original compartmentalized design of these *parterres* to an embroidered pattern probably did not occur until the eighteenth century, as Italian gardeners long resisted this style, although it had been popularized elsewhere in the mid-seventeenth century through French pattern book engravings.[22]

Like the Villa Borghese, the Villa Pamphili illustrates the grand scale and quasi-public character of the seventeenth-century Roman garden parks where some members of the populace were occasionally permitted entry. In their rich display of architecture and sculpture to ennoble and dramatize landscape, these great Roman villas memorialize the opulent lives of the princes of the Church in an age of proudly ambitious aristocracy.

Tuscan Garden Design: Villa Garzoni and La Gamberaia

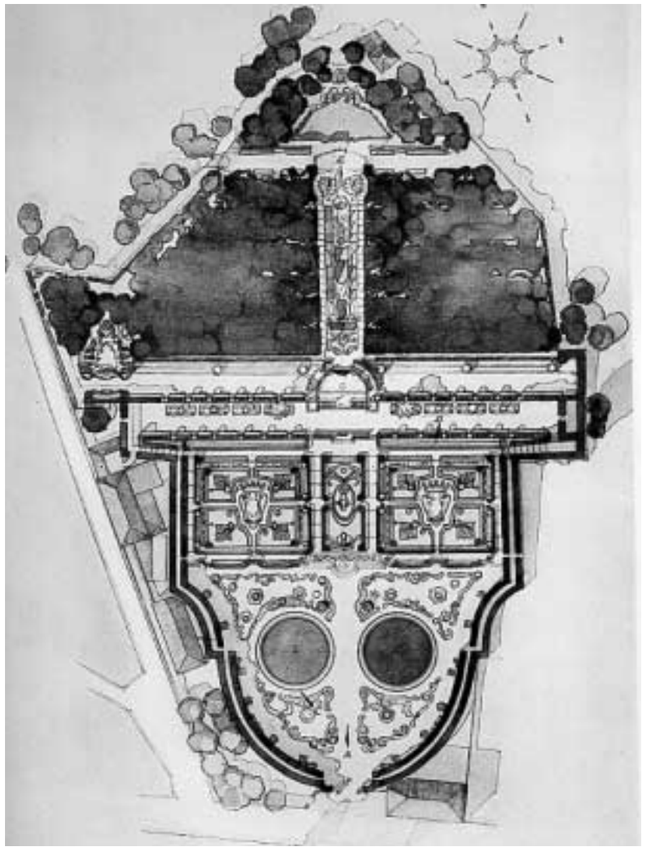
In Tuscany, outside the Italian center of international power, the breadth of scale and architectural grandeur found in the Villa Borghese and the Villa Pamphili remained foreign. Although in villas around Florence and Lucca one finds Roman design idioms—for instance, hanging hillside terraces with vase-topped balustrades, cascades, and ornamental sculpture—these characteristics are manifested in a far less extravagant manner. Most of the gardens of Tuscany built in the seventeenth century have an affinity with earlier gardens such as those of the Villa Medici at Fiesole. Their designs are conservative, usually composed as a series of outdoor rooms with views of the surrounding agricultural landscape of olive trees and vineyards. One of these is usually a *limonaia,* a walled garden filled with potted lemon trees, which were removed in the winter to an adjacent long, barnlike conservatory (fig. 5.31). But Tuscan gardens show innovative and evolutionary tendencies as well, first those characteristic of a Baroque sensibility, and later those of the graceful Rococo style of the eighteenth century, when many additions or remodelings of old gardens were made.

Where the nineteenth-century fashion for English-style gardens did not obliterate the original designs and restoration has been possible, present-day maintenance costs and a preference for abstraction have caused the planting schemes of these old gardens to be simplified. But in the best-preserved of them, we may still find the exuberant curvilinear movement and ornamentation characteristic of the Baroque style. It is to be seen in the black-and-white pebble-ornamented walls, the pebble mosaic paving, the sculptural hedges, the lavish use of ornamental statuary (much of it in terra-cotta), the water theaters, and the intimate green theaters in which *commedia dell'arte* performances were held—all of which are characteristic of this golden age of Tuscan garden design.

The outlying garden closest in spirit to the Roman Baroque models is that of the Villa Garzoni in Collodi, near Lucca, a composition of hillside terraces with robust balusters and lighthearted sculptural decoration, arabesque floral *parterres* with heraldic devices in colored pebble mosaic, and a water cascade issuing from a grotto, above which soars a figure of Fame trumpeting her horn (figs. 5.32, 5.33). The villa itself bears a curious relationship to the garden because of its origins as a defensive castle strategically sited with a ramp leading from the town below.[23] Purchased by the Garzoni family from the Republic of Lucca in the early years of the seventeenth century, it was transformed into a villa with gardens on the adjacent slope several decades later. Subsequent improvements, such as the addition of a bathhouse near the apex of the cascade, were made in the eighteenth century under the direction of the Lucchese architect Ottaviano Diodati.

Central niches reinforce the main axis between each set of double stairs. In keeping with the more frivolous spirit of the later age, these and various side niches are inhabited by a whimsical blend of genre figures and pagan deities. Here and elsewhere, in the company of Apollo, Diana, Pomona, Ceres, Bacchus, and other familiar mythological garden residents including fauns and herms, one finds sculpted peasants engaged in agricultural pursuits. Thus, the grotto with Neptune rising in his horse-drawn chariot from the sea occupies the niche on a middle terrace, while a peasant holding a cask is contained in the terrace below, and a peasant with a turkey stands in the one above. These three niches are heavily framed with rusticated stone set against walls of *rocaille*-work fashioned into black-and-white arabesques. Black-and-white pebble-mosaic paving ornaments the ground plane in

5.31. *Limonaia.* Vicobella, Siena



5.32. Plan of Villa Garzoni, Collodi, near Lucca, Italy. Drawing by J. C. Shepherd and G. A. Jellicoe, from *Italian Gardens of the Renaissance,* 1925

Below: **5.33. Villa Garzoni**

5.34. Staircase with monkeys, Villa Garzoni

several places, continuing the characteristically Baroque curvilinear surface patterning. A terra-cotta band of twelve monkeys playing ball adds piquant charm to the balustrades of the upper terraces (fig. 5.34).

From here one can look down and appreciate the arabesques of box *broderie* surrounding twin circular pools, the elaborate floral and stone mosaic *parterre* with the Garzoni monogram and heraldic devices, and the curvilinear cresting of the sculptured yew hedge that contains the whole of the lower garden in a generous embrace. An outer hedge parallels this hedge, creating a shady walkway around the perimeter of the lower garden.

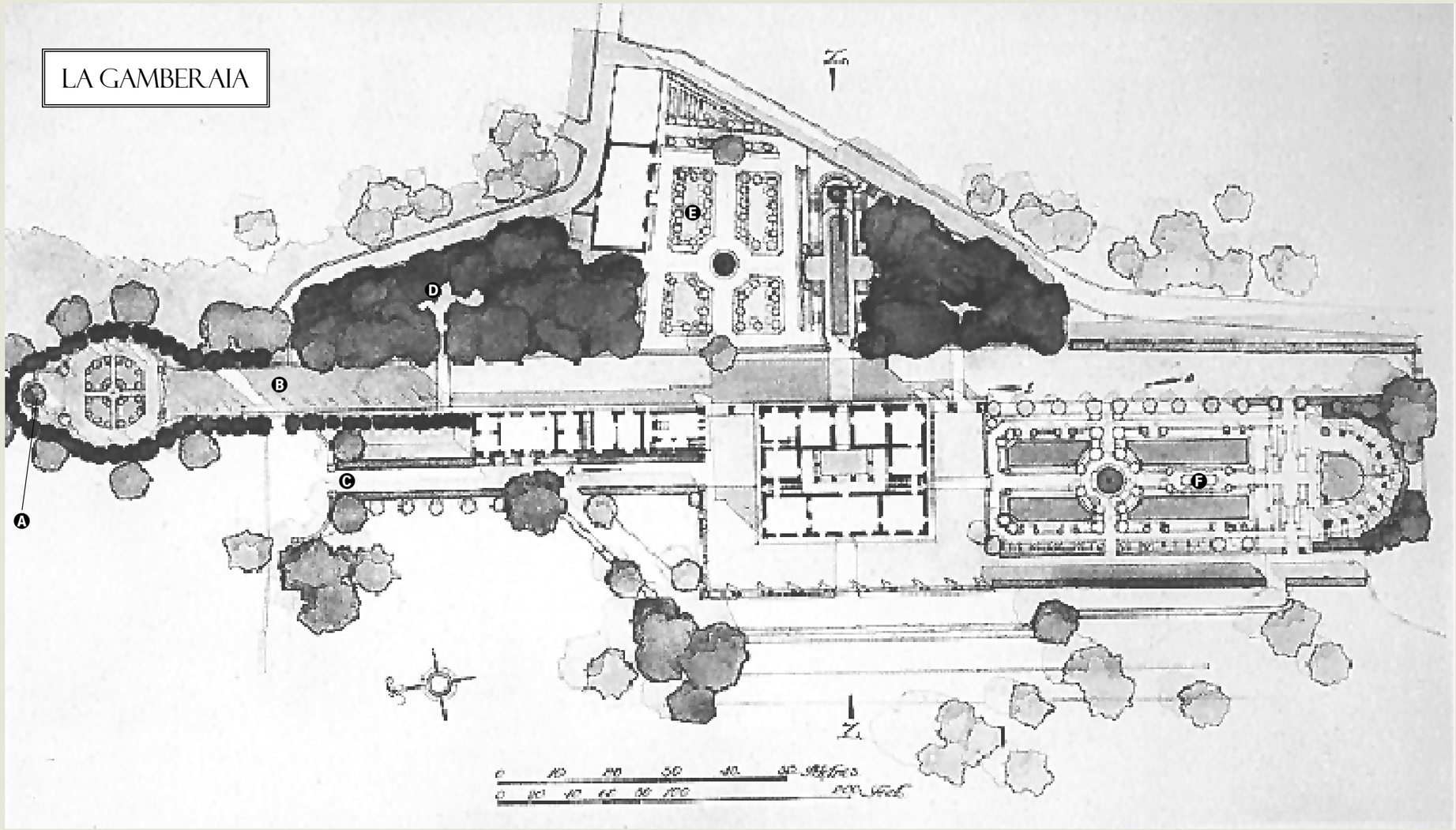
Close association of the garden with its agrarian environs; intimacy of scale and conservative retention of old forms such as lemon gardens; shady *allées* of ilex trees, terra-cotta figures, sculptured hedges, and pebble mosaic walks—all characteristic elements of the Tuscan garden—can be found at La Gamberaia in Settignano on the outskirts of Florence (figs. 5.35–5.38). The artful twentieth-century restoration of this garden forsakes historic accuracy, instead emphasizing the abstract geometries of its Baroque shapes and animating its period character in other ways that are pleasing to contemporary taste.

The place takes its name from that of the original owners of the property, the Gambarelli family. According to a plaque over the door, in 1610, Zanobi Lapi erected the handsome simple villa around a central court. The garden was laid out between 1624 and 1635 by his nephews and heirs. During the eighteenth century, the Capponi family owned the property, and they altered and embellished it with statuary, fountains, and a long green bowling alley. A *giardino segreto* was set into the hillside beneath the lemon garden at this time. Seriously mutilated during World War II, La Gamberaia was subsequently acquired by Marcello Marchi, who restored it to its present excellent condition.

Extravagant End of an Era: Isola Bella and Caserta

Entirely different in spirit from the quiet conservatism and unassuming beauty of Tuscan gardens, Isola Bella, Count Carlo Borromeo's grandiose fantasy in Lake Maggiore in northern Italy, is unsurpassed as an illustration of the theatrical character of Italian Baroque design (fig. 5.39, see pp. 2–3). Today Isola Bella is more lush and romantically patinated by time than it was when, from 1630 to 1670, the Borromeos leveled an island off the coast of Stresa in Lake Maggiore and erected the great tiered galleon of a garden named in honor of Count Carlo's wife, Isabella. The fundamental theatricality of this unusual landscape comes from its phantasmagorical appearance, rising improbably like a ghostly vessel from the clear mountain-fringed waters of Lake Maggiore. Its wedding cake of terraces opens out to embrace the view, and its high cresting sculptures gesture into space (fig. 5.40).

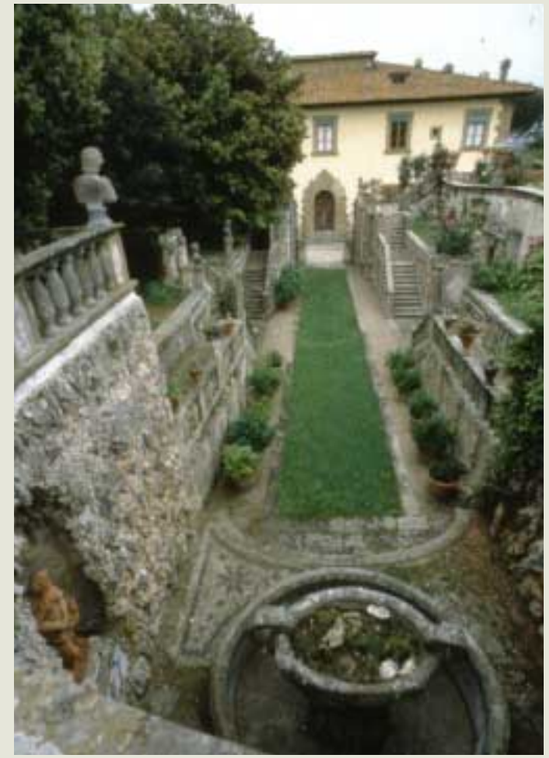
Because of the shape of the island, the garden is not on axis with the palace; the relationship of the two is camouflaged by trees, and one does not realize that upon climbing the stairs of the interconnecting Courtyard of Diana, with its pebble-faced, arched niches and statue of the goddess, one has changed directions. The *parterres* above were originally laid out as *broderies* in the French fashion. Facing these is a



5.35. Plan of La Gamberaia, Settignano, near Florence, Italy. Garden built 1624–35; altered and embellished by Capponi family after 1717; restored with water *parterres* by Princess Ghyka, early twentieth century. Drawing by J. C. Shepherd and G. A. Jellicoe, from *Italian Gardens of the Renaissance,* 1925.
Ⓐ *Nymphaeum.* Ⓑ Bowling lawn. Ⓒ Entrance. Ⓓ Bosco. Ⓔ Lemonaia. Ⓕ Water *parterre*

One enters La Gamberaia from a gate that leads up a long hedge-bordered drive to the principal portal of the villa. To the right, facing west, overlooking its immediate landscape of olive trees and, beyond this, the city of Florence, is a grassy terrace contained by a low parapet surmounted by Baroque finials and stone dogs. To the left of the villa entrance, extending all along its eastern side and beyond to the north and south, lies the turf bowling alley flanked by a high, urn-surmounted retaining wall of stucco. The long surface of this wall is broken by painted panels of geometric design and enlivened by a pattern of dark stucco resembling a balustrade. Tall cypresses mark the northern end of the bowling green, and there one finds a *nymphaeum* of decorative black-and-white *rocaille*-work with reliefs of two musicians on the outside and Neptune flanked by lions on the inside. To the south, this avenue of grass ends in a balcony overlooking Tuscan vineyards and olive trees.

The retaining wall separates the bowling lawn from an elevated *bosco* of mature ilex and a fine lemon garden. This lemon garden overlooks the eighteenth-century *giardino segreto,* a narrow court of elaborate *rocaille*-work, now filled with pots of hydrangeas (fig. 5.36). Surrounded by a balcony balustrade decorated with stone busts and urns as well as a figure of the god Pan at its eastern end, it is entered by ornamental staircases on either side. Light and shadow play over its wisteria-draped, fern-sprouting rustic walls and terra-cotta statues set within niches. La Gamberaia's *parterre* garden has well-proportioned pools of water instead of planting beds, a curving hedge with arched openings overlooking the Arno Valley, and stone putti peeping forth from immaculately clipped topiary (figs. 5.37, 5.38).



5.36. *Giardino segreto,* La Gamberaia

5.37. Villa La Gamberaia

5.38. Water *parterre,* La Gamberaia

water theater. One mounts a set of concave-convex stairs to arrive at the terrace upon which this extravagant confection, encrusted with pebbles and decorated with niches framing giant scallop shells and statuary, rears against the sky. Projecting into the blue Alpine backdrop is the family emblem—a prancing unicorn—and plume-capped obelisks, as well as several oversized statues. Behind the water theater, from another small *parterre* garden, one may look down upon other Borromean splendors: fountains, exotic plants, rare flowers, and a flock of white peacocks.

By the eighteenth century, courts all over Europe were imitating the design concepts developed a century earlier by Le Nôtre in France. At Caserta, near Naples, Charles III, the Bourbon king of Spain, Naples, and Sicily, hired Luigi Vanvitelli (1700–1773) to design the gardens of La Reggia in 1752 in a manner and on a scale clearly meant to rival Versailles. The immensely long canal axis, nearly 2 miles (5 kilometers), does not stretch illusionistically into the distance, however, but ends in an Italian-style hillside cascade (fig. 5.41). This monument to Bourbon grandeur is made vacuous by its sheer size, since it lacks the same understanding of optics based on laws of perspective, the same integration of parts into mathematical harmonies of scale, and the artful grade manipulations and incidents of intricacy that give variety and surprise to Le Nôtre's grand compositions. In short, the subtle intelligence that provided both grace and power in Le Nôtre's designs is largely absent in Vanvitelli's work, and Caserta remains interesting primarily for the ambition it displays.

The French classical style, as we have seen, was informed by Cartesian mathematics and the politics of authority. It was forged in the crucible of the post-Copernican view of the cosmos as not being Earth-centered and spherically contained, but heliocentric and open-ended. The Italian Baroque style, on the other hand, expresses a lofty confidence based less on science than upon its rich patrimony from the antique past. This confidence was combined with theatrical zest to produce bold architectural effects and grandiose sculptural compositions. Together, these two traditions were imitated in countless places, sometimes separately, sometimes in combination, often with modifications because of local culture and topographic conditions. Until revolution and Romanticism discredited the royal and aristocratic patronage that had created them, they constituted a formal design vocabulary that became the idiom of courts and cities throughout Europe.

Top: **5.39. Isola Bella, Lake Maggiore, Italy. c. 1630–70**

Above: **5.40. Gardens, Isola Bella**

Right: **5.41. Cascade, La Reggia, Caserta, near Naples, Italy. Designed by Luigi Vanvitelli. 1752**