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Architecture within Architecture
Strategies of Spatial Design in Andrea Palladio's Villas

Introduction

This article will pay special attention to a phenomenon that plays a key role in many of Palladio's villas and that seems crucial in understanding Palladio's sophisticated concept of space and architecture [fig. 1]. It will focus on the interplay between real and painted architecture, the extension and enhancement of Palladio's architecture through murals, and the conceptual merging of architecture and painting, the two fundamental space-creating principles.

1
Paolo Veronese and workshop (most likely in collaboration with Andrea Palladio), Sala dell'Olimpo, Villa Barbaro, Maser, 1560/61.

In many of Palladio's villas, painted architecture is one of the most important elements of decoration.[1] Not only does it provide the rooms with a distinct structure, it creates a unique self-sufficient form of decoration so that painted architecture can be considered a leitmotif within the villas.[2] Aside from its pure framing function, painted architecture plays a crucial role in shaping and manipulating space. Completely covering the surfaces of a villa's walls, painters combined architecture with landscapes and historical figures to open the rooms onto illusionistic worlds. By doing this, the murals provoked a substantial effect on the observer's perception of the interior. But there is more. Implementing a fictitious space into a real one creates illusionistic rooms, which seem, at first glance, to be in conflict with the building in which the illusion is taking place.

Andrea Palladio was a master of spatial design. Unlike any architect before him, he understood how to design the various levels of space. Particularly with regard to his extraordinary villas, the following can be formulated: Palladio did not consider the courtyard in isolation from the façade, the façade not isolated from the staircase leading into the building, the loggia not detached from the exterior and interior space, the *salone* not independent of its views and vistas of the surrounding landscape. As Palladio postulated in his book *I Quattro Libri dell'Architettura*, published in 1570, the parts have to be in harmony with the whole, and the whole has to be in harmony with its parts.[3]

This paper investigates the assumption that the architect applied this consistency also to the interior decorations of his villas and that he understood the murals as important protagonists of an overall design when placing a painted architecture within real architecture. This examination is intended to reflect on Palladio's spatial concepts, the perception of space within his villas as well as the emotional-sensual evocation of interior space.

The key thesis is this: In Palladio's villas space is not built, it is designed, and that principle can be observed very clearly in areas

where architecture and wall painting meet and are set in relation to each other. At these spots, illusions are made plausible to the viewer; at these seams, painting and architecture are transformed into an image that opens up to the observer's space.

Although illusionistic fresco painting was explored by Italian artists and patrons since the early 14th century—one may refer to Giotto's fresco cycle in Assisi (Upper Church, S. Francesco, c. 1300) and the *Last Supper* fresco in the Florentine Church San Apollonia by Andrea del Castagno (1447)—very little is known about the theory and critical perception of that kind of decoration. However, in 1537, the architect and author Sebastiano Serlio released his *Libro Quarto*, which deals with domestic decorations, including painted architecture and its potential to create optical illusions. As a key example, Serlio referred to the *Sala delle Prospettive*, painted by Baldassare Peruzzi in the Roman Villa Farnesina for the banker Agostino Chigi shortly before 1519.[4] In this room, the walls seem to open towards deep loggias, which are difficult to identify as paintings. Serlio highlighted this illusionistic masterpiece as an example of a perfect deception: "And if the painter then wishes to elongate a hall or other room by using the art of perspective, he will be able to make that part that faces the entrance seem much longer than in reality by rendering some architectural orders. And this Baldassare [Peruzzi] did, so gifted in this [kind of] art [...]."[5] As Serlio clearly stated, painted architecture has the potential to change a room's visual appearance.

Reflecting on ideas of mimesis and illusion, the following examination will focus on the mural decorations of the Villa Godi, the Villa Barbaro, and the Villa Emo. By choosing these Palladian buildings of the Venetian terraferma, which were decorated between c. 1540 and 1570 by the painters Gualtiero Padovano, Paolo Veronese, and Giovanni Battista Zelotti, it is the aim of the essay to highlight the various forms of painted architecture and to investigate Palladio's attitude towards the illusionistic wall decoration.

Villa Godi

Although almost all of Palladio's villas feature opulent wall paintings and make-believe architecture that manipulates the interior, very little is known about what Palladio thought about this kind of decoration. Unfortunately, he never commented on the subject of illusionistic painting.[6] In his book *I Quattro Libri dell'Architettura*, he mentions and praises some painters but he never reflects on painting in terms of art theory. For Palladio laying down generally applicable rules for interior decoration made very little sense because he obviously knew from many years of experience that the wishes of clients and fellow painters usually led to very individual solutions. By implementing strict rules, he would have restricted this creative freedom.

So far, only one drawing is known that Palladio probably made in preparation for a mural painting. Whether it is an original or a contemporary copy is still disputed.[7] This drawing was identified by Douglas Lewis as a draft for the Salone of the Villa Godi. In addition, we also know of payment records to Palladio, which suggest that the architect was paid for wall-painting designs at Villa Godi. One question is at the center of this controversy:[8] Did Palladio consider wall painting merely as an additional supplement to his buildings or did he see it as an important extension of interior space?

The Villa Godi is considered Palladio's first villa conceived and built by him between 1537 and 1542 for the Vicentine nobleman Girolamo Godi and his family.[9] The architect was only 30 years old at the time. Here, the main themes of Palladio's architecture were formulated for the first time, such as the connection of the elevated villa with lateral buildings, the prestigious emphasis of the central axis by stairs and loggia, the opening of the country house to the landscape, nature, and rural fields, the intended staging of framed views and vistas by windows and doors, the symmetrical room layout and the central *salone*, which, in accordance with Venetian tradition, runs across the entire floor. As Andrea Palladio tells in his *Quattro Libri*, the piano nobile of

2
Gualtiero Padovano, Stanza dei Cesari, Villa Godi, Lugo di Vicenza, 1548/50.

Villa Godi was painted, among others, by Gualtiero Padovano. In his treatise, he praises the frescoes, executed around 1548 and 1550, as "the most beautiful paintings".[10]

Almost every room on the piano nobile was decorated with frescoes. Characteristic of the early stage of the Palladian villa is the fact that for each room an individual decoration was applied, not unlike the rich interior mural paintings in the Villa Imperiale in the vicinity of Pesaro (1530–1537; painted by Girolamo Genga and his workshop).[11] Diversity and variety apparently were considered more important than the concept of an overall unifying design.

In the rectangular *Stanza dei Cesari*, the viewer finds himself in the middle of a painted loggia [fig. 2]. Four vistas, framed by marble columns, offer a panoramic view.[12] The three real windows blend in with the painted architecture so that the room opens up to landscapes through a total of seven vistas. Already Vitruvius demanded a high degree of realism from such kind of painted architecture.[13]

In the midst of this *stanza*, an entertaining interplay of painting and architecture opens up a life-like loggia, known at the time, for example, from the Villa Imperiale.[14] The observer enjoys the endless landscapes and their idealized depictions of *Santa Agricoltura* and *Paradiso terrestre*, key topoi to the Italian villa culture in that period of time.[15] The framed views out into fertile nature—created by the artist's hands—and the high credibility of the illusionistic architecture increase the illusion of living in a perfect environment, surrounded by green plains, sheep, blue rivers, and Roman ruins.[16]

Still today, the surprise is enormous. Having just seen the modest façade of the villa, the viewer unexpectedly is confronted with an opulent, roman-like architecture of colored marble and gilding. The Villa Godi was inspired by central Italian archetypes such as the *Sala di Costantino* (1520; Vatican) by Raphael and Giulio Romano, or the *Sala Paolina* (1545–47; Rome, Castel S. Angelo) by Perino del Vaga. In this sense the columns and walls are shown in a monumental manner, enabling them to carry the room's ceiling. By focusing on the mimetic potential of painting, the illusion evokes a classical order that seems touchable and, at the same time, is close to contemporary architecture like Sansovino's Libreria in Venetian's Piazzetta di S. Marco or Falconetto's Loggia Cornaro in Padua.

In the *Sala dei Cesari* we meet an important leitmotif of Palladio's villas: the combination of real architecture and wall painting, creating an artistically generated experience of space. The wall decoration seems to proclaim: Space is not only designed by architecture. It is shaped by the combination of the arts. Blurring the real framework of the architecture, architecture itself transforms into an expanded image—and the image transforms into architecture. In short, in the *Sala dei Cesari*, illusionistic mural decoration is seen through the eyes of an architect.

3
Andrea Palladio, Villa Godi, Lugo di Vicenza, 1537/42.

The fact that the magnificently painted architecture had no counterpart in the non-classical façade obviously was no problem, neither for Palladio, nor for the painters [fig. 3]. Evidently, they separated the decorative potential of external (real) architecture and that of the mural paintings, accepting the two in a harmonious relationship. Extending the eleven real views through the windows and the loggia, the murals in the southern rooms of the Villa Godi add twelve illusionistic vistas to the villa. Particularly interesting is the fact that the painted views are very often set in direct interplay with the Villa's windows. That interplay is visible impressively in the *Stanza di Bacco e Proserpina*, a small room in the rear part of the building used most likely as bedroom [fig. 4, 5].

4
Gualtiero Padovano,
Stanza di Bacco e
Proserpina, Villa Godi,
Lugo di Vicenza,
1548/50.

5
Andrea Palladio, Villa Godi, Lugo di Vicenza, 1537/42, detail of the window and its benches.

Andrea Palladio had equipped some of the villa's real windows with benches. Certainly, a reminiscence of traditional palace architecture, but above all, a reference to the importance of the topos of windows and views within the villa culture. In his famous book *Gli Asolani*, published in 1505 in Venice, the humanist Pietro Bembo, for example, had already praised the window benches as the ideal place to enjoy the landscape.[17] With great attention to detail, Palladio designed these benches in the Villa Godi—and with equal attention to detail, Gualtiero Padovano cited and transferred them into his make-believe architecture.

Thus, the painting in the *Stanza di Bacco e Proserpina* repeats the real window while providing an exquisite illusion[18]: a little boy—most likely the young Bacchus—sits on the bench, looking directly at the viewer outside the image.[19] The child is eating grapes, and simultaneously, he seems to invite the observer to take a seat on the painted bench, to join him in his joyful pictorial world of prosperity and peace.

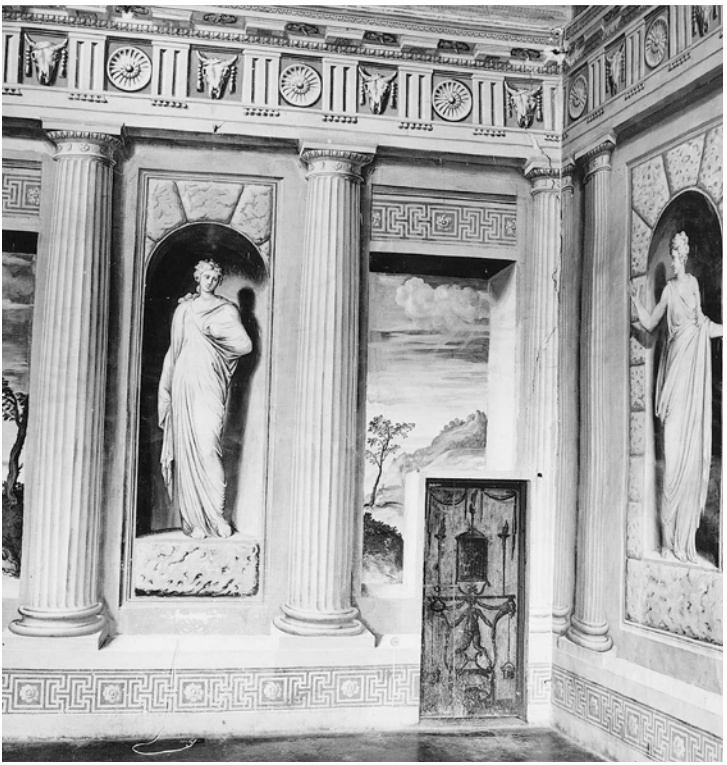
The interplay between painting and architecture is remarkable, and it seems no coincidence that the frescoes in other rooms of Villa Godi also repeat forms that Palladio used in various buildings at the same time. The southern room next to the Loggia (*Stanza dei Sacrifici*), for example, features a Doric frieze of the kind Palladio used for the façades on Palazzo Chiericati (Vicenza) and Villa Pisani (Montagnana) between c. 1550 and 1552 [fig. 6, 7].

The murals in the *Stanza di Bacco e Proserpina* have a tremendous effect on the observer's perception of interior space: Palladio's architecture becomes part of an illusion that fundamentally expands the real room into a deeper imagined space. Even the clouds of the divine sphere penetrate the view behind the painted frame. The imitation of light and shadow enhances the mimetic effect of this impressive spatial play, in which the body of the visitor as well as his movements play a part. What would this room look like without its painted architecture? Would it not be small and boring? In any case, it would be much less spectacular, much less sensical, and much less entertaining.

Villa Barbaro

Speaking of the entertaining potential of illusionistic wall paintings within Palladio's secular buildings, we must shift our attention to Villa Barbaro, one of his most famous country houses, constructed in a village called Maser at the Terraferma. The villa of Daniele and Marcantonio Barbaro, brothers and noblemen from Venice, was painted by Paolo Veronese and his workshop around 1560/61. Influenced by detailed villa descriptions from the Roman politician and author Pliny the Younger, Palladio designed the central body as an elongated building that looks out over the landscape on all three sides.[20]

Fifteen windows frame the landscape so that nature becomes an essential visual aspect of the interior. These real vistas are enriched by eloquent, most impressive interior wall paintings that decorate the five living rooms of the *piano nobile* as well as



6
Gualtiero Padovano, Stanza dei Sacrifici, Villa Godi, Lugo di Vicenza, 1548/50.

7
Andrea Palladio, Villa Pisani, Montagnana, 1553/55, detail of the façade.

its central cross-shaped *salone*.[21] A total of twenty-six painted views open the walls, showing picturesque scenes of landscapes, ruins, rivers, green trees, and rural buildings—even the Villa Barbaro itself is depicted in a self-portrait. By implementing a magnificent unifying decoration system made of painted Ionic and Corinthian columns, marbled windows, and illusionary doors, the Piano nobile transforms to a belvedere with forty-one real and painted vistas. This transparent (or diaphanic) quality literally negates and obscures the solidity of Palladio's primary architectural concept.

Particularly the murals in the so-called *Stanza del Tribunale d'Amore* and *Stanza di Bacco* manipulate the perception of interior space with great power [fig. 8].[22] On the north and south walls, illusionistic architecture depicts deep loggias, adding life-like pictorial spaces to the villa. The complex fictitious architecture, that most likely was designed in situ with the help of pre-drawings (*cartoni*) in the scale of 1:1, presents itself in a Palladian-like elegance and solemnity *all'antica*.[23] Inspired by prototypes from Central Italy, like the *Sala delle Prospettive* made by Baldassare Peruzzi in the Roman Villa Farnesina some decades earlier and following the principles of the art of perspective and optical illusion, the painted architecture in Villa Barbaro no longer serves as a limit between the space of the observer and the pictorial space.

Paolo Veronese was, in fact, a master of painted architecture. He designed and executed it, unlike any other Venetian artist, in an outstanding "theatrical magnificence"[24]. Be it in paintings, be it in fresco, Veronese many times used painted architecture to arrange his narrative scenes and to evoke an ambiance *all'antica*. In none of his other projects, however, painted architecture had such a strong impact as in Villa Barbaro. He most likely was advised by Palladio, as well as by Daniele Barbaro, commentator of Vitruvius' architectural treatise *Dieci libri dell'architettura di M. Vitruvio* (first edition from 1556). As the astounding interior decoration indicates, Daniele Barbaro as well as Veronese and Palladio must have been very interested in exploring the transitory potential of the wall's surface.[25]

8
Paolo Veronese and workshop (most likely in collaboration with Andrea Palladio), Stanza di Bacco, Villa Barbaro, Maser, 1560/61.

In his article, *Andrea Palladio e le architetture dipinte di Veronese*, Howard Burns stated that the quality of the decoration of Villa Barbaro indicates mutual cooperation between painter, architect, and patron[26]: "The realization of Maser's decorations required, at the programmatic and design level, the talent and science of the patrons especially Daniele, Palladio, and Veronese. Without Palladio and Barbaro, it would not have been possible to plan a reconstruction of the appearance of ancient Roman interiors, starting from the text of Vitruvius and Palladio's knowledge (and restitutions) of Roman temple environments, later published in the *Quattro Libri*."[27] The assumption that Daniele had a deep influence on the interior decoration is also supported by the fact that, shortly after the completion of Villa Barbaro, he occupied himself intensively with the art of perspective—the basis for painted architecture: In 1569 Daniele published his results in the book *La Pratica della Prospettiva*.

Using the art of perspective, the walls of Villa Barbaro appear, in reference to Gerd Blum's studies, as as *finestre aperte*, or open windows, and are therefore committed to the fundamental Renaissance notion of painting as window, as Leon Battista Alberti wrote in his art theory *Della Pittura* around 1435–36.[28] The optical enlargement of the *Stanza di Bacco* and the *Stanza del Tribunale d'Amore* changes the entire perception of the rooms. The painting adds elegant, almost free-standing, marble-white belvederes to Palladio's architecture. Even the real light of the window becomes part of the illusion as the painted columns cast shadows [fig. 9]. The space seems to be walkable and to be part of the room. Probably real architecture and painted architecture, real space and illusionary space, have never before entered into such a convincing union. The perspective quality of the illusion is outstanding. The viewer is surprised, confused, and at the same time delighted, unmasking the illusion.

9
Paolo Veronese and workshop (most likely in collaboration with Andrea Palladio), Stanza del Tribunale d'Amore, Villa Barbaro, Maser, 1560/61, interplay between the real window and the painted architecture.

When planning the villa, Palladio must have already had the future murals in mind. It is likely that he designed the sculptural frieze zone in the rooms in preparation for the painting that was yet to be done. The architect laid the foundations, the framework, in which Veronese and his assistants could credibly embed their illusion. The painting, in turn, quoted the Ionic columns that also adorned the façade—in this way, the interior and exterior design were closely intertwined. As Erik Forssmann explained about 50 years ago, a Palladian elegance can be noted for the painted architecture[29]: The rhythmic sequence "pillar—round niche with sculptures—pillar—rectangular window—pillar—round niche—pillar", that was used to organize the walls in the *Stanza del Tribunale d'Amore* and in the *Stanza di Bacco* is also found in a remarkably similar design in Palladio's illustrations of the so-called Egyptian Hall (*La Sala Egizia*) and Corinthian Hall (*La Sala Corinthia*), published less than ten years after the completion of the frescoes in Villa Barbaro [fig. 10]. As formulated by Burns: "It cannot be argued that the false 'opening' of the wall is alien to Palladio's principles or taste, since a similar approach is also observed in the frescoes of Villa Emo and Villa Poiana."[30]

The Villa Barbaro presents itself as an example for the "ideale congenialità"[31] between Veronese and Palladio, between the painter and the architect and, in general, between painting and architecture in the 16th century.[32] The Villa Barbaro finally shows impressively that architecture and mural decorations were conceived by the painters, the patrons and their architect as an overall concept.[33]

Villa Emo

The painters who, next to Paolo Veronese, chiefly inspired the way of using illusionistic mural decoration in Venetian villas were Giovanni Antonio Fasolo and Giovanni Battista Zelotti. In their work, they successfully combined monumental orders of architecture with well narrated-historical scenes. Painted architecture created space for human actors and transformed

10
Andrea Palladio, La Sala Corinthia, woodcut from the book *I Quattro Libri dell'Architettura*, in: Palladio 1570, II 39 (Cap. IX).

closed walls into an open stage-like area in which Roman history was told. The interplay between architecture and wall painting in Palladio's villas can only be fully understood by examining Villa Emo, decorated by Zelotti around 1565 in the rural village of Fanzolo.[34] It is a project in which the interplay of real and painted architecture reaches a climax. This villa illustrates impressively the methods Palladio and his fellow painters followed in shaping interior space merging the physical world with the world of imagination.

As a mediator between inside and outside, between landscape and architecture, the loggia of Villa Emo occupies a prominent position in Palladio's understanding of architecture and its surrounding space. As in many others of his country houses, the loggia of Villa Emo is conceived as a space of transition [Schwellenraum] that gives the architecture a nearly transparent quality. Using monumental doric columns that unmistakably define the entrance area of the villa, the loggia has a highly communicative quality. The dignified design of the open façade literally draws the guest into the architecture. Once in the loggia, this place presents itself as a protected area between inside and outside, offering a sublime view of the surrounding lands.

The importance of painting in designing interior space is underlined on the loggia's three walls that were ornamented with elaborate decoration [fig. 11]. The murals are intended to transform the entrance area into a space that stages painted figural scenes as seemingly real vistas. Beyond two painted rectangular frames, the observer witnesses two scenes of ancient mythology, partly inspired by Ovid's book *The Metamorphoses*: *Jupiter seducing Callisto in the form of Diana* (left painting) and *Juno beating Callisto whose hands have already changed into bear paws* (right painting). Above the central door, in the form of a woman, lies the *Allegory of Agriculture.*

11
Giovanni Battista Zelotti (most likely in collaboration with Andrea Palladio), Loggia, Villa Emo, Fanzolo, c. 1565.

In the loggia, real and painted architecture merge into a symbiosis which is on par with Villa Barbaro. Here in Villa Emo, as in Villa Barbaro, the detailed repetition of Palladio's architecture is

12
Giovanni Battista Zelotti (most likely in collaboration with Andrea Palladio), Loggia, Villa Emo, Fanzolo, c. 1565, detail of the painted Attic base.

remarkable. The paintings create deceptive copies of Doric columns and imitations of Attic bases using the classical sequence "torus—trochilus—torus" [fig. 12]. In the tradition of *paragone*—i.e., the artistic competition between architecture and illusionist painting—real and painted columns stand side by side, each claiming to be the true sister of the other. The vivid dialog of painting and architecture is also revealed in the loggia's ceiling and its monumental beams. There, the painted columns give the impression that they support the heavy ceiling [fig. 13]. This illustrates an observation already described above at Villa Godi and Villa Barbaro: painted architecture is almost never purely decorative or additive in nature; rather, the illusory architecture in the loggia of Villa Emo reveals itself to be an integral part of a plausible overall architectural construction.

Noticeable is also the unique illusionary wooden pergola in the vestibule of the villa. Previously, painted pergolas, as in the famous Odeo Cornaro (Padua), designed by the landowner and author Alvise Cornaro around 1540, or in the Villa Barbaro, consisted of delicate branches and leaves of vines [fig. 14].

13
Andrea Palladio, Villa Emo, Fanzolo, 1559/65, interplay between the Loggia's ceiling and painted architecture.

14
Giovanni Battista Zelotti (most likely in collaboration with Andrea Palladio), Vestibule, Villa Emo, Fanzolo, c. 1565, detail.

The wood structure in Villa Emo, instead, is characterized by its thick wooden boards and correct construction. Even in detail, the painting mimics a wooden structure that could be built. Considering that Palladio occupied himself on several occasions with wooden buildings—for example at the Ponte Vecchio in Bassano del Grappa from 1569[35]—the architect's participation in the decoration of Villa Emo becomes much more convincing.

The assumption that Zelotti's painted architecture took part of an overall design becomes particularly obvious in the central *salone* [fig. 15]: there, comparable to the loggia, Palladio designed a coffered ceiling with wide and heavy beams. Since a ceiling of this kind cannot hang freely above the viewer and real columns were not executed—as for example, in the *salone* of the Villa Cornaro in Piombino Dese—we have to assume that it was Palladio, who, together with the painter (and probably motivated by the Venetian Emo family)[36], planned the elaborate illusionary architecture. The heavy beamed ceiling really seems to rest on columns. A detailed look at the decoration system reveals that the paintings and the architecture match perfectly. This constructive coherence can also be observed in other rooms of Villa Emo. There, too, the beams rest on painted columns [fig. 16].

The fact that the real wooden architrave in the *salone* was not covered with plaster but instead remained visible and was decorated with paintings, thus becoming a part of the fictitious architecture, confirms the assumption that Palladio prepared his architecture in advance for his fellow colleague Zelotti.

The illusionistic effect is impressive. As already observed by Wolfram Prinz, the room seems to be divided by four (painted) columns—similar to the ancient *Sala di Quattro Colonne*, meaning the Vitruvian hall with four free-standing columns.[37] Supporting the heavy coffered ceiling, the added columns give credibility to the painted spaces: art begins where architecture ends, and vice versa. The architect himself was very fond of the *Sala di Quattro Colonne*, a motif that he used on several occasions and that was also described in detail in his *Quattro Libri*.[38] He particularly appreciated this type of room since it ensured more stability to the construction. Moreover, four free-standing columns provide a harmonious proportion in the interior.[39] Consequently, he argues both as a structural engineer and an artistic designer.

15
Giovanni Battista Zelotti (most likely in collaboration with Andrea Palladio), Salone, Villa Emo, Fanzolo, c. 1565.

16
Giovanni Battista Zelotti (most likely in collaboration with Andrea Palladio), Salone, Villa Emo, Fanzolo, c. 1565, interplay between ceiling and painted architecture.

We do not know why Palladio has chosen not to use real columns in the Villa's *salone*. Perhaps the space seemed too small to erect columns; perhaps columns were a luxury that the client did not want to pay for. One thing is certain, though: fictitious architecture always has been a smart way to save money and to express a certain kind of modesty at the same time. Regarding motifs, the illusionary architecture in Villa Emo appears with the highest claims (Corinthian order) but is executed with comparatively inexpensive materials (painting).[40] That concept follows Palladio's pragmatic belief that the design (the form) always must be considered more important than the materials it is made from.

The four white columns make the *salone* of Villa Emo an exceptional visual experience. The painted architecture and its two scenes of virtue, designed much more opulently than the sober exterior, opens up spaces for scenes from the long-gone Roman antiquity: *The Death of Virginia* and the *The Mercy of Scipio*.[41] Using two-meter high bases on each wall and an

architectural arrangement strikingly reminiscent of the façade of the church of San Francesco della Vigna (c. 1570) built by Palladio in Venice, both, painted architecture and historical figures form a plausible narrative space. The idea of the Vitruvian *Sala di Quattro Colonne* is transformed into an architecture that enriches the squared *salone*. It delights and educates the viewer through historical examples. In the very center of the Palladian villa, painted architecture unites and separates past and present, reality and ideas, truth and illusion.

Finally, the depiction of the *Allegory of Architecture* illustrates how much Zelotti reflected on the interplay between architecture and painting [fig. 17].[42] The female figure presents the drawn floor plan of the villa and points precisely to the very room where she and the viewer, outside this programmatic depiction, find themselves.

17
Giovanni Battista Zelotti, Stanza delle Arti, Villa Emo, Fanzolo, c. 1565, detail from the fresco *Allegory of Architecture*.

General Methods

Evidently, painted architecture is one of the most important elements of decoration within Venetian villas. Even by provoking certain conflicts with the interior, even by adding new arrangements that change the plan, and even by putting magnificent wall paintings in contrast to a plain and clear Palladian form, it was the intention of painted architecture not to disturb but to create unique spaces. With the help of illusionism, the very character of many Venetian villas, that means the strong interaction and visual relationship between house and countryside, between framing architecture and distant landscape, as also described by Palladio himself, was translated into the genre of wall decoration. Thus, the frescoes reflected in a congenial manner the concept of transparent and open architecture that offered various perspectives. The fact that Palladio liked that kind of transparent quality and the idea of directing the eye through architecture—be it painted, be it real—is also supported by the artist himself. Talking about stairs and doors, he recommended architecture that shows the viewer the most beautiful areas of the building as soon as he looks through the main door.[43] Changing one's views in a building leads to creating tension. At the same time, according to Palladio, this visual dramaturgy would make the building appear larger than it is.

According to the previous analyses, the following strategies (general methods) can be summarized as a working basis and impulses for continuing considerations.

1. *Strategy of coherence*
Many Palladian villas display an intense structural interaction, a harmonious interplay of real and painted architecture. Painted architecture hereby does not create disruptive arrangements in the villas but aims at a formal and spatial connection with the building's real dimensions. This observation confirms a proposition made by Lewis: "Palladio himself may thus be shown, through documents, drawings, and printed prototypes […] to have been unquestionably the inventor and supervisor

of the complete decorative cycles within his two most controversial interiors, those of the Villa Godi at Lonedo of 1549–1557, and the Villa Barbaro of 1558–1561."[44]

2. *Strategy of imitation*
Painted architecture imitates Palladio's architecture in detail, repeating it on opposite walls (like a mirror) and thus provoking a vivid interplay between reality and imitation, between fact and illusion, between the real space and the painted space.

3. *Strategy of spatial flexibility*
It becomes apparent that Palladio did not perceive the interior space as absolute. Interior space is not so much shaped by the actual architecture, rather it is shaped with the help of the added painted architecture. The art of painting was therefore used to simulate what could not be realized on-site, due to costs or to structural limitations. The following evolution can be observed: While in the early stage of the Palladian villa (Villa Godi), nearly each room was decorated with an individual system of painted architecture, in Villa Barbaro and Villa Emo, the artists aimed at a more unifying layout of the murals. This was a programmatic shift most likely stimulated by Palladio, for whom a harmonious appearance and a correspondence of all parts to each other always was of paramount importance.

4. *Strategy of dissolution*
In dialogue with real architecture, painted architecture establishes manipulative arrangements that blur the dimensions of elevations and plans. The walls are dissolved in their function as the picture's surface, questioning, thus, the very essence of the image. This dissolution provokes a perception of space and body, through which the narrowness of the rooms is annulled. The viewer is still in a sheltered interior, protected from the outside world and its potential negative influences (bad weather, political instabilities, social conflicts, economic challenges), but simultaneously can enjoy a vastness and openness that architecture cannot offer.[45] It is well known that already Leon Battista Alberti had described the healing effect of landscape paintings. In strong

correlation with the Palladian architecture, the art of wall painting puts an idea on display which is key to understanding the Venetian villa culture: the painted vista—staged as an idealized image of landscape and domesticated nature—becomes a permanent, imperishable setting—a visual soundtrack, so to speak—for the exclusive life in the countryside.

5. *Dramaturgy of movement*
We observe a certain dramaturgy that progressively evolves in splendor as the visitor moves from the exterior to the interior (modesty at the exterior—Roman magnificence in the interior). As exemplified by Palladio and Zelotti in Villa Emo, the theme of magnificence [Magnificenzia] is found only inside the building. Already Kornelia Imesch noted that the Villa Emo's external sobriety (Tuscan order) contrasts with its interior splendor (Corinthian order), expressed primarily through painted architecture.[46] A conceptual movement can thus be discerned, flowing from the modesty and ornamental restraint of the façades to the picturesque splendor of the interiors.

6. *Strategy of emotional design*
The unity of real and painted architecture generates feelings of surprise, astonishment, and overwhelmingness. It provokes feelings and moods, which the viewer's body consciously or subconsciously perceives.

7. *Strategy of immersive architecture*
Palladian architecture and images (paintings) stimulate and enhance each other. In this sense, an illusionary architectural framework provokes an immersive effect. Architecture becomes an expanded image. Interior space is not built; it is—by using the art of painting—designed. Therefore, the murals functioned as an extension of artistic, creative power.[47]
This immersive quality is, in the author's opinion, one of the foundations for Palladio's success and for his timelessness to this day.

When we see how gifted Palladio was in the field of interior design, and when we recognize how flexible and creative he was in the dialog with his fellow painters, we understand how innovative he was and how his methods and his ways of creating space and influencing the observer's perception resonate until today.

Endnotes

If not indicated otherwise, all translations are by the author of this paper.

1 For an introduction to painted architecture in the mural decoration of the 16th century, see Blunt 1959; Sandström 1963; Krieger 1996.

2 For the illusionistic mural decoration in Venetian villas of the Cinquecento, see Fischer 2014, 74–158; Burns 2014a; Burns 2014b.

3 Palladio 1570, II 1.

4 For an introduction to the wall paintings of the *Sala delle Prospettive*, see Sandström 1963, 102; Luchterhandt 1996; Kliemann/Rohlmann 2004.

5 Serlio 1584, vol. 1, IV, 11, fol. 192r: "Et se'l pittor vorrà tal volta con l'arte della prospettiva far parere una sala, o altra stanza piu lunga; potrà in quella parte, che guarda all'entrata, con alcuni ordini d'Architettura, tirati con tal arte farlo parere assai più lunga, di quel che ella non sarà in effetto. Et questo fece Baldassare cosi dotto in questa arte […]."

6 See Wolters 1968, 255–256.

7 Lewis 1982, 68–73.

8 For a short summary of that controversy, see Fischer 2014, 102.

9 For an introduction to its mural decoration, see Pavanello/Mancini 2008, 272–286.

10 Palladio 1570, II 15.

11 See Börsch-Supan 1967, 262–263.

12 Fischer 2014, 100–108.

13 Vitruv 2009, VII 5.

14 Fischer 2014, 50–52.

15 For the metaphorical significances of painted landscapes and framed vistas in the Venetian villa of the 16th century, see Fischer 2014, 59–73, Blum 2015, Fischer 2015a, Fischer 2015b.

16 See also Smienk/Niemeijer 2011.

17 Fischer 2014, 37.

18 For the interplay of real and painted windows in 16th-century mural painting, see Fischer 2016.

19 Fischer 2014, 144–149.

20 Burger 1909, 108. See also Huse 1974, 115–118.

21 For an introduction to the mural decoration of Villa Barbaro, see Pavanello/Mancini 2008, 322–346.

22 Fischer 2014, 119–125.

23 Fine lines in the plaster of the *Stanza di Bacco* indicate that *cartoni* were used to prepare the complex illusionistic architecture. See Burns 2014b, 31.

24 Burns 2014a, 4.

25 See Forssman 1967a; Forssman 1967b.

26 This assumption was also stated by Huse 1974, 106–122.

27 Burns 2014b, 30–31: "La realizzazione delle decorazioni di Maser richiedeva, a livello programmatico e progettuale, il talento e la scienza dei committenti sopratutto di Daniele, di Palladio e di Veronese. Senza Palladio e Barbaro non sarebbe stato possibile pianificare una restituzione dell'aspetto degli interni romani antichi, partendo dal testo di Vitruvio e dalla conoscenza (e restituzioni) di Palladio degli ambienti dei templi romani, poi pubblicati nei Quattro Libri."

28 Alberti 2002, II, 19, 92. For Alberti's concept of painting that creates illusionistic windows, see Krüger 2001, 27–45; Blum 2008; Blum 2015, chapter III, 7.

29 Forssman 1967b, 71–76.

30 Burns 2008a, 116: "Non si può sostenere che la falsa 'apertura' del muro sia estranea ai principi o al gusto del Palladio, dato che un simile approccio si osserva anche negli affreschi di villa Emo e villa Poiana." The affirmative attitude of Palladio towards the mural decoration in his villas is confirmed also by Oberhuber 1968, 188; Lewis 1980; Lewis 1982, 73–74; Fischer 2014, 104.

31 Brizio 1960, 21.

32 The fact that Palladio, in his short description of Villa Barbaro, did not mention Veronese as the artistic master of the villa's frescoes (often interpreted as evidence of his dislike of illusionistic paintings in general) might also be based on the mutual collaboration of painter, architect and patron. Praising Veronese as the mural's inventor would have decreased the performance of the architect and contractor. See Burns 2014b, 31: "Si può anche aggiungere che per Palladio elogiare Veronese specificamente per gli affreschi avrebbe significato dare credito al pittore per un lavoro in parte anche suo e di Daniele Barbaro […]."

33 See Rybczynski 2004, 45.

34 Introducing the mural decoration of Villa Emo see Pavanello/Mancini 2008, 224–238.

35 Puppi 2000, 389–390.

36 Forssman 1999, 70–71: "Es kann kaum ein Zweifel bestehen, dass Zelotti, wohl auf Wunsch des Bauherren, in der Villa Emo die Sala di Quattro Colonne mit der Hilfe der Wandmalerei wiedererstehen ließ."

37 Vitruv 2009, VI, 3, 1; Prinz 1969.

38 Palladio 1570, I, 8, 36–37.

39 Palladio 1570, II 8, II 14, II 17.

40 See Imesch 2003, 139.

41 Pavanello/Mancini 2008, 224–238.

42 Rupprecht 1966, 210.

43 Palladio 1570, I 28.

44 Lewis 1982, 73.

45 That thought was inspired by Friedrich 2015, 51–52.

46 Imesch 2003, 113.

47 By examining the close intertwining of architecture and painting within Palladian villas, the present study tried to add some thoughts to the analyses on architecture as an extended image in Palladio's work, recently published by Blum 2015, and by Bürklin 2019.