

BOOK REVIEWS



IL TEMPIO DELLA NOTTE. ARCHITETTURA IPOGEA NEI GIARDINI PAESAGGISTICI. Breda M.A. *Giardini e Paesaggio*, Vol. 35. Leo S. Olschki, Florence (Italy), 2012, pp. 112. ISBN 978-88-222-6194-6. € 23.00.

In this 35th volume in the “Giardini e Paesaggio” series Maria Chiara Zerbi, in her presentation, underlines that the book is the result of many years of enthusiastic work and that through it the reader can appreciate these “architecturally secret places that were found in what were once private gardens but are now part of public lands, neglected and in need of restoration and consolidation to restore the original quality”.

The author brings to this work many years of experience as a historian of garden architecture and history and treats in this book a unique theme: the *Temple of the Night*, an underground architectural element, or rather an environment within a grotto found in English-style gardens in Italy between the end of the 18th and beginning of the 19th centuries, and probably influenced by Germany models.

The book deals with two cases studied in depth by the author and highlights her ability to observe and compare, to recognize different situations for what they are, and to bring these aspects together through systematic study. She successfully presents the data through drawings and photographs, which make the book pleasant to read and easy to understand.

The first of the two cases, the temple created within one of the artificial grottoes in the park of the Conte Ambrogio Uboldo at Cernusco sul Naviglio, is known to specialists but has not been studied before. The second is a previously-unknown temple uncovered by chance in the park of Villa Batthyany near Gorla (in the province of Milan).

This is an interesting contribution – both scientifically and historically-culturally – to the vast literature in landscape studies. The reader will discover new and significant knowledge through this unique book that escapes easy definition. Indeed, its originality renders the book special for the specific topic, and especially as a way to know more about hidden architecture that until a few years ago essentially unknown.

Francesco Ferrini

PIETRO PORCINAI A PISTOIA E IN VALDINIEVOLE. Bucelli C.M., and C. Massi (eds.). *Giardini e Paesaggio*, Vol. 34. Leo S. Olschki, Florence (Italy), 2012, pp. XIV+376. ISBN 978-8822-6162-5. € 39.00.

Pietro Porcinai, one of the great landscapists, worked in Pistoia and the Valdinievole area from the early 1930s to the 1980s. As explained in the presentation of this volume, his concern for the social aspect of gardens - as a healthy environment for recreation and sport, as a place to play, as well as for urban living and as an extension for the suburbs - is particularly evident around Pistoia. Examination of his masterpieces in the province of Pistoia is fundamental in the study of his vast and important production. This volume aims to gain greater insights into the link between the artist and the Pistoia landscape, with the idea that the matrices and points of reference for many of his projects in the area come from the atmosphere around him, and is a further testament to the role Porcinai's work has played, and continues to play in garden design.

Supported by the experience and careful attention of the two editors, the book is a valuable guide to the work of this landscapist. Through its interesting text, personal stories, drawings, past and present images, the volume is also a fascinating work of art in itself and will be appreciated as an enrichment of the current literature on this topic, meeting the needs of technicians and students and an ever-increasing number of enthusiasts. Clearly, the meticulous genius of Porcinai shines through, demonstrating that there is still much to know about him and his important work.

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