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THE VILLA IMPERIALE AT PESARO

by

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ABSTRACT

The Villa Imperiale at Pesaro remains one of the few grand Italian Renaissance villas to have escaped exploitation for the tourist industry. Curiously enough, it has also been long neglected in the field of modern art historical scholarship. The only major study is Bernhard Patzak's Die Villa Imperiale bei Pesaro, published in 1908. Before, and since then, the majority of accounts dealing with it have been of a purely local Pesarese character--either brief guide-book references to it, or redundant versions of Pompeo Mancini's literary blueprint, written for the Esercitazioni dell'Accademia Agraria of Pesaro in 1844.

More recently, Giuseppe Marchini, former Superintendent of Galleries in the Marches, published an attractive and well-illustrated book on the Villa Imperiale, to coincide with the completion of the villa's restoration. Although Marchini's book is extremely valuable for its visual material, it does not contribute to the scholarship on the villa's history. Craig Hugh Smyth, who had been a consultant for the restoration of the Villa Imperiale's frescoes, is concentrating his efforts on determining the authorship of the eight-room decorative cycle. With the exception of one enlightening essay, also by Smyth, the architecture of the Villa Imperiale has not yet inspired any major revaluation.

Although Patzak's monograph, the standard reference work for more than sixty years, is an informative study, many of its arguments appear unsatisfactory in the light of modern scholarship. In such a case, it is undoubtedly the art history student's responsibility to reinterpret the evidence, employing the methods which have been developed in the interim.

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The Villa Imperiale, on Monte S. Bartolo outside of Pesaro, consists of two separate structures from different periods. In the sixteenth century, the buildings become inter-related--physically, by a connecting wing; and functionally, in terms of an iconographic programme devised to serve a common purpose.

The earlier structure was built by Alessandro Sforza in 1469. Emperor Frederick III, on a post-coronation journey to Italy, passed through Pesaro, and performed the office of laying the foundation stone. A plaque hangs above the main entrance to commemorate the event.

As a mid-fifteenth century structure, the villa is designed with the idea of versatility in mind. The concept of villeggiatura, as it was being promoted in contemporary Florence, was not yet popular or expedient in Pesaro. Alessandro Sforza was principally a soldier, and his buildings reflect his tastes and requirements. Because of its site on top of a hill, the villa could play both defensive and offensive roles in battles. When war was not the momentary occupation of Alessandro, the Imperiale worked well as an economic unit. The land on which it stands was fertile and well cultivated; a forest surrounding the villa on three sides provided adequate game for hunting, whether for sport or necessity. It was built with expansive subterranean rooms which served as storage, and food conversion, areas.

Patzak noted that the architectural motifs and proportions of the Sforza villa, particularly in the cortile, must date from a period before 1469. He suggests 1452, when Frederick came to Italy the first time, to be coronated Emperor. However, the dif-

ficult political relationship between Frederick and Francesco Sforza, Duke of Milan, would seem to exclude the probability of a visit by the Emperor to Francesco's brother, Alessandro, Lord of Pesaro, at that time.

What Patzak has overlooked is the display of similar architectural proportions in the Palazzo Prefettizio of Pesaro, a structure built c1450, when Alessandro assumed control of the city. The transposition of a system of architectural proportions from one building to another is not unprecedented. Indeed, the physical proximity, and the common patron, of the Palazzo Prefettizio and the Villa Imperiale, underline the suitability of the theory.

In 1512, Pesaro and the Villa Imperiale were expropriated from the Sforza family by Julius II, for his nephew, Francesco Maria della Rovere, Duke of Urbino. Political and dynastic intrigues on the part of the Medici Pope, Leo X, prevented Francesco Maria from finally securing his Dukedom, and with it the Villa Imperiale, until 1522.

Subsequent to his reoccupation, the Duke initiated a restoration and renovation programme for his various estates. The Villa Imperiale, damaged in a battle of 1517, required extensive repairs. Girolamo Genga, a native of Urbino, was called from Rome to become court architect to Francesco Maria.

Along with the restoration, a programme was conceived for the decoration of several grand apartments in the Sforza villa. Only two ceilings exist from this earliest project. The next plan, which remains today, involved the painting, with a fresco cycle, of eight apartments. The programme was carefully devised to ensure the proper procession through the rooms of the old vil-

la, over a connecting bridge, into an entirely new structure, built behind the Sforza villa. The architectural experiences of Francesco Maria's new villa are cleverly and subtly anticipated in the frescoes of the Sforza villa. This second project, involving the frescoes and the new villa, was conceived and begun between 1524 and 1527.

Before he turned to architecture, Genga had been a designer of stage sets. The frescoes, and the architecture of Francesco Maria's villa, show his indebtedness to the theatre. In fact, the Villa Imperiale was to function as the stage for the activities of the Duke of Urbino's court, so the conceit is, paradoxically, entirely suitable.

In the della Rovere villa, entrances and exits, means of access from one space to another, are as disguised to the visitor's eye, as they would be in a real theatre. Participation and exploration solve the problems encountered in trying to move through the complex.

When the visitor finally arrives at the far end of the last terrace, a giardino segreto, he is confronted by the only independent entrance into the new villa (the other is by way of the Sforza villa, and over the connecting wing). Regarding the villa from this position, the sight confronting him is a negation of the architectural spaces experienced only moments before. As it is, he can see no architectural spaces at all--only what appears to be a solid building with four towers. The architectural setting has changed as quickly and completely as the painted backdrop of a stage might be exchanged. The guest is delighted and confused; the illusion is complete.

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Unless otherwise noted, they are by the author--

Fariello, 56; Levey, 16; Marchini [La Villa Imperiale], 6, 18-45, 48, 57; Olivieri [1781], 4; Pinelli, 46; Seitz, 2, 17; Vaccaj [Bergamo], 3; Wittkower, 15.

CHAPTER I: THE SFORZA VILLA IMPERIALE

A few kilometres north-west of Pesaro, on the south slope of Monte S. Bartolo, stands the Villa Imperiale (Figs. 1 and 2). It actually comprises two structures, although these become physically joined and iconographically interrelated in the sixteenth century. The structure to the south was begun by Alessandro Sforza in the second half of the fifteenth century; the one behind, and slightly to the west, was built for the della Rovere family in the first half of the sixteenth century.

Unlike that of the later villa, the building campaign under Alessandro Sforza is not well documented,¹ and has consequently led to a number of hypotheses regarding the architect and the construction period. An examination and clarification of the events resulting in the villa being named "Imperiale" should help to define a more precise initial building period. This, in turn, should indicate a more specific context, in terms of chronology, in which to look for the possible designer or architect.

It is generally accepted that the Villa Imperiale received its name from the act of Frederick III of Austria laying the foundation stone, during his return from Rome where he had been crowned Holy Roman Emperor. Frederick's coronation occurred in 1452; tradition, however, will have it that the Villa Imperiale was begun in 1469. Giuseppe Marchini, the most recent scholar to study this villa, traces the origin of what he believes to be the 1469 misdating, to an account by the late-sixteenth century Pesarese chronicler, Ludovico Zacconi.² Bernhard Patzak, whose monograph of 1908 is still considered the standard work on the villa, thinks Olivieri, a late-eighteenth century local historian, is to be credited with

falsely publishing the date as 1469. Therefore, he does not place much trust in the following rather enlightening document, in which Olivieri has compiled various sources testifying to Frederick's Pesaro visit at the later date:

«Ebbe Alessandro l'onore di servire quest'anno, benchè di passaggio, in Pesaro l'Imperator Federico 3., che andava a Roma a prendere la Corona Imperiale dal Papa. In un viglietto del bravo Marc'Antonio Gozze di sopra lodato, scritto a Camillo Giordani da Calibano li 14. Novembre 1435. [sic.], leggesi: Quanto alla venuta a Pesaro di Federigo Imperatore trovo così in alcuni Mss. 1468. Federigo 3. d'Austria Imperatore venne a Pesaro adi 16. Dicembre a sei ore di notte per andare a Roma a incoronarsi a tempi di Papa Paolo II. Veneziano. Il Muratori ne suoi annali ci avvisò già, che Federico giunto a Ferrara ai 10. di Dicembre, proseguì nel dì 12. il suo viaggio a Roma, onde arrivato a Pesaro alle sei ore del dì 16., trattenuto si sarà qui il seguente giorno dei 17., nel quale spedì quel Diploma Dat. Pisauri die 17. mens. Decembris anno Dñi 1468. Regnorum nostrorum &c. con cui Spectabilibus militibus Dñis Ranerio, Almerico, & Francisco fratribus & filiis Dñi Petrigeorgii de Almericis conferisce la dignità di Conti Palatini Sac. Lateranen. Palatii, auleque nrē & Imperialis consistorii comites facimus, il quale Diploma conservasi nell'Arch. Jord. Almer. n. 41. Del ritorno poi così segue il Gozze nel sopradetto viglietto: 1469. Federigo 3. ritorna da Roma adi 23. Gennaro, e gli fu fatto grande onore in Pesaro dal Commune e dal sig. Alessandro Sforza, et andò a spasso per la città, e lodò il sito dove è posta, e volse andare sopra il vicino colle, dove nel fondamento vi buttò una pietra di sua mano, e volse che il Palazzo che il sig. Alessandro aveva dato ordine di fare si chiamasse Imperiale, e così si è sempre nominato. Nèèè maraviglia, che fosse questo Palazzo da un tanto onore detto l'Imperiale, dacche veggiamo dai rogiti di Sepolcro, che quella camera medesima in cui l'Augusto fece in Pesaro sua dimora, cangiato nome, fu detta in appresso la camera dell'Imperadore. In noie &c. 1469. & die sexta Maii. Actum in civit. Pisauri in domibus Illu. D.N. Alexandri Sfortie Comitìs Cotignole, Pisauri Dñi &c. videlicet in camera residentie ad pns pref. Illu. Dñi dicta la camera de lo Imperadore posit. in dictus domibus &c. Dell'uso poi, che a'nostri di fu barbaramente

fatto della iscrizione innalzata al Palazzo, la cui pietra fondamentale fu posta da Federigo, parlai nella lettera Sopra un medaglione non ancor osservato di Costanzo Sforza pag. VIII. 3

In the above extract, one notes that Gozze has stated 1469 as the coronation and subsequent building date, which a number of historians have repeated, seemingly unaware of a seventeen-year discrepancy between the two supposedly proximate events. Vanzolini, in 1864, and Firpo, in 1957, refer to the initial date as 1464, but fail to substantiate it.⁴ Patzak and Marchini both prefer the earlier--1452--dating, for reasons which will be discussed below.

A clearer reading of Frederick's activities in Italy will reveal that the traditional date should be credited with accuracy, even in the face of persuasive contradictory theories by eminent art historians.

On 1 January 1452, Frederick III came to Italy with three specific intentions--to be crowned Holy Roman Emperor; to receive the crown of Lombardy; and to marry Donna Leonora, daughter of the King of Portugal. Frederick's public image was never that of a fearless monarch, and, characteristically, his journey through Italy was by way of those cities which could assure him a pacific welcome.

Frederick's suite included many Italians in the role of ambassadors. The diplomatic mission of the Milanese was perhaps, at least in their own consideration, the most delicate and pressing. Francesco Sforza, Duke of Milan, had gained control of Lombardy in a somewhat ruthless manner, upon the death of the last Visconti, a few years earlier. Frederick III had certain claims to Lombardy, and Francesco, recognizing

these, and being aware of his intentions, wished to invite him to receive the crown from his own hands rather than from the Pope.⁵ Such a gesture would be a politically advantageous one on the part of Francesco, allowing him to manoeuvre thereafter under the credit of Frederick's name; were the Pope to perform the ceremony, it would be an undisguised attack on the Sforza occupation and usurpation of Lombardy.

Frederick refused to be swayed by the entreaties of the ambassadors,⁶ and, upon his arrival in Rome, wasted little time fulfilling all three plans. Due to the strained relationship consequently existing between the Emperor and the Duke of Milan, Frederick III carefully avoided Sforza's territories on his return to Germany.⁷ It seems unlikely, in such a situation, that Frederick would have accepted an offer from Francesco's brother, Alessandro, to lay the foundation stone of a villa near Pesaro, another Sforza stronghold since 1447.

Yet Frederick returned to Italy in December 1468.⁸ His itinerary, unlike that of the earlier visit, included a journey along the Adriatic, from Ravenna to Loreto.⁹ As is indicated by Olivieri's compilation of documents quoted above, he visited Pesaro this time, though only briefly on December 16 and 17. Frederick departed from Rome 9 January 1469, and, if the document in Olivieri is verifiable, was in Pesaro again on 23 January.¹⁰ The confusion of 1469 with the coronation date can be attributed to a faulty reading of history. Consulting another contemporary source, one notes that Vespasiano da Bisticci does not mention the imperial coronation as a prelude to Frederick's Pesaro visit: "Bastogli la vista alloggiare lo 'mperadore con tutta la sua compagnia, tra in casa sua e nel-

la terra; e fecegli grandissimo onore, percessere diligentissimo in tutte la sua cose; e per questo onore ricevuto, gli dono l'arme sua, e fece moltissimi privilegi a tutta la casa, gratis." ¹¹

The historical events outlined above, indicating the improbability of Frederick's presence in Pesaro in 1452, but the possibility of a visit during the second trip, are corroborated by an impresa fixed above the main portal of the Villa Imperiale (Fig. 6), carrying the inscription: Alexander Sfortia MCCCCLXVIII [sic.]. Curiously enough, there are only two historians who, in reference to the inscription, have published the date as 1469--Pompeo Mancini and Henry Thode. ¹² Both were able to examine the villa before the completion of a restoration programme undertaken in 1880. The first article published upon conclusion, or close to conclusion, of the restoration is by Fritz Seitz in 1905, who reads the date as 1468. ¹³ Patzak agrees with this reading, as does Marchini. In order to reconcile it with their earlier dating of the villa architecture, Marchini interprets 1468 as the terminus ad quem of construction, whereas Patzak believes the style of the impresa indicates it belongs to a later period, and need therefore not be considered valid in terms of evidence. ¹⁴

One can suggest a number of possibilities to account for the controversy. An obvious one is think that Mancini and Thode misread the date. Less obvious, but more attractive, is the possibility that the inscription originally stated 1469, and, sometime between 1888 (Thode's article) and 1905, had the final roman numeral obliterated. On the other hand, Seitz might not have consulted Thode, ¹⁵ and simply misread the date

himself, which later historians then repeated. Seitz, anyway, does not attribute absolute credibility to the date, be it 1468 or 1469, since he mistakenly thinks Alessandro Sforza died 1466.¹⁶ Similarly, Patzak does not want to rely on the inscription date to any great extent, since he is concerned with assigning the construction of the villa to an earlier period.

Patzak's observation, whether accurate or not, that the impresa belongs stylistically to a later era, brings up an interesting point. Olivieri states that in 1763 Clement XIII allotted the Villa Imperiale to Portuguese Jesuits. Alterations and reparations were undertaken by the architect Vichi, from Fano, who also, apparently without the least qualms, removed the impresa and utilized it as a wash basin for the Jesuit community.¹⁷

According to Olivieri, the impresa had first been removed when Genga commenced work on the della Rovere Imperiale.¹⁸ That it was subsequently replaced, at least before Vichi endowed it with a functional purpose in 1763, is indicated by two drawings--a view of the villa by Minguzzi in 1626 (Fig. 3), where the impresa is only briefly sketched in; and one of the series of Villa Imperiale plans made by Buonamici in 1756 (Fig. 42) in which the impresa is clearly represented, with an enlarged version to the left. Even if the impresa had to be replaced after Vichi's maltreatment of it, which Patzak seems to think,¹⁹ it is only reasonable to assume that the date inscribed on a copy would be 1469, in view of the fact that that is precisely the date insisted upon by the local Pesarese chroniclers.

Patzak's preference for the 1452 dating of the Sforza villa depends initially on the juxtaposition of this architecture to that of the Palazzo Ducale in Urbino, specifically of that section begun by Luciano da Laurana c1467--two years prior to the later dating of the Villa Imperiale.²⁰ According to Patzak, a post-1467 date for the Imperiale would clearly condemn it as an example of stylistic regression.

The comparison Patzak makes is an acceptable one, in so far as there was a certain amount of socio-political intercourse between the Montefeltro of Urbino and the Sforza of Pesaro. Federico da Montefeltro, however, chose Laurana specifically because he, unlike most contemporary architects, comprehended the styles of Brunelleschi and Alberti, and was able to develop this knowledge into his own personal architectural vocabulary, thereby avoiding anything in the nature of a pastiche.²¹ Given this unique ability of Laurana, it does not necessarily follow, indeed it rather excludes the possibility, that Alessandro Sforza employed a similarly gifted architect during that period.

Patzak's juxtaposition is further complicated in that he is comparing a town palace with a country villa, two architectural units for which he makes no allowances regarding different contexts and functions. In terms of art history, the Urbino palace became the centre of activity for many leading fifteenth century artists--the names of Piero della Francesca, Luciano da Laurana and Francesco di Giorgio come readily to mind. The Sforza villa is not, in comparison, a monument of equal prestige in the eyes of posterity. There exists no contemporary literature, let alone artistic endeavours, witnessing to, and

immortalizing, the character and function of this villa. Indeed, its precise function requires some thought to ascertain. Keeping in mind post-fifteenth century changes in the fabric,²² one must draw one's conclusions from the location and appearance of the villa, with reference to what one knows of Alessandro's activities. Patzak describes it as a casa di signore closely connected to an economic unit.²³ It has also been called a hunting box, and a fortress or watchtower.²⁴

In terms of physical location, it is well suited to any of these. The land sloping off to the south is presently a vineyard (Fig. 1), and it has been suggested that there were originally fruit trees in the vicinity;²⁵ There is an expansive wooded area nearby, which even today remains a hunting reserve.²⁶ Furthermore, the villa is situated high enough on the hillside to afford a view over both the land to the south, and the sea to the east.

Nor does its appearance deny any of these possibilities. Built on a platform, it provides large subterranean rooms for the storage and conversion of foodstuffs and supplies.²⁷ The architecture is closed off, rather than open, to the countryside, and the substructure is spacious enough to billet an army of soldiers.

These functions are all consistent with what one knows of Alessandro Sforza's character, which is essentially that of a condottiere.²⁸ Perhaps the most satisfactory temporary solution is to see it as a combination of the above named, but allowing it the versatility to function in the role of one or the other, as the situation demanded.

Patzak finds a precedent for the Imperiale in the Tuscan Early Renaissance villa type. In this, he is following Seit's description of the Sforza villa as having "die Form des früheren toskanischen Landsitzes", ²⁹ although Patzak greatly expands on this theme. The possibility of a Tuscan precedent is substantiated by the relationship existing between the Sforza and the Medici at that time. Alessandro, and his son, Costanzo, were often hired as condottieri by the Republic of Florence. During such military expeditions in Tuscany, they had ample opportunity to see, and to develop a taste for, the Florentine villa type. ³⁰

One of the outstanding characteristics of the Tuscan Early Renaissance villa, and the one that is of particular interest in the Imperiale, is the cortile. Patzak emphasizes that, since the Sforza villa was spared the fate of many fifteenth century Florentine villas, it is significant not simply because it is a Tuscan transplant to the Marches, but because it very likely preserves the character of this Early Renaissance villa type, specifically in regard to the cortile, in its original form. ³¹ The contemporary Florentine villas had suffered extensive damage when the mercenary troops moved northward through Tuscany after the Sack of Rome in 1527. When these villas were later repaired, or rebuilt, it was presumably in the current style, without thought given to an archaeological reconstruction. ³²

Subjecting the Villa Imperiale to a careful scrutiny, Patzak decides the irregular appearance of its elevation and plan are the result of an Early Renaissance insensitivity to this kind of architectural harmony. ³³ The east facade is of pronounced irregularity, and provides Patzak with the key to

a reconstruction of what he believes to be the original fifteenth century aspect of this villa.³⁴ Immediately to the left of the tower (Fig. 1) is a narrow segment, higher than the rest of the east facade, which Patzak interprets as an addition to join two originally separate structures--the southern wing of the villa as it stands today, and the tower with flanking wing. At a later period, additions were built north and west to form a cubic structure. It was presumably at this time that the cortile was built.³⁵

For confirmation of his theory regarding the villa's original appearance, Patzak refers to the reverse of a medal cast for Costanzo Sforza in 1474 (Fig. 4).³⁶ In this instance, Patzak agrees with Olivieri's identification of the scene:

"In faccia vedesi il Monte Acio, che diciam ora di S. Bartolo, verso il quale a bandiere spiegate s'indirizzano le altre truppe di Costanzo per una strada, che puo dirsi in oggi resa impraticabile, ma che allora era in grand'uso. In cima di questa collina, oltre la Chiesa di S. Bartolo, mirasi la Villa tutta dell'Imperiale, fabbricata da Alessandro Sforza"³⁷

Patzak's reliance on Olivieri in this case is somewhat remarkable, if not inconsistent, since the existence and description of this medal (non ancor osservato) were first published by Olivieri, whom Patzak had previously accused of being a "forger of archaeological objects".³⁸

From the evidence of the irregular building fabric, and the medal, Patzak concludes that the original Imperiale was an example of the villa entering its second phase of evolution from a medieval fortified economic unit, i.e. a villa fruttifera or casa colonica, to the villa in the Renaissance sense of the term.³⁹ In other words, the living quarters--or

southern wing--were already distinctly separate from the functional buildings--the tower and flanking wing.

The structure seen in the background of the medal reverse is, indeed, composed of two architectural units corresponding fairly closely to the outline of the Imperiale. This interpretation, however, contradicts Patzak's original theory of the early, i.e. 1452, dating of the cortile--the medal was cast in 1474, and shows the buildings as clearly detached, not joined to permit construction of an inner arcaded courtyard. ⁴⁰

Upon conclusion of his thesis, one must realize that Patzak's initial error is due to believing the terms style and time as correlative when speaking of progress. Consequently, the innovation of Laurana's Palazzo Ducale at Urbino denies the possibility of such a structure as the Villa Imperiale succeeding it--the date 1452 wins by default. That such a point of view is no longer absolute is indicated by Ackerman's statement that "We would get a clearer image of Early Renaissance architecture by recognizing that, while the archetypes of the palace and church were formed in the second quarter of the fifteenth century, villa design took shape in the last quarter." ⁴¹

For more than half a century, Patzak's monograph was considered the culmination of scholarship on the Villa Imperiale. In 1968, Marchini became the first to respond with a study on the Sforza villa. ⁴² His article can, in a sense, function as an extension of the 1908 thesis. Patzak is primarily concerned with a stylistic and structural analysis to shed light on the chronological development of the Imperiale in particular, and of the Early Renaissance villa in general. Marchini employs a similar approach to advance the study one step--he suggests a

possible architect, who is Giorgio Orsini da Sebenico.⁴³ Furthermore, Marchini is the only scholar to agree with Patzak on the earlier dating of the Villa Imperiale.⁴⁴ He justifies the validity of the date 1452 by the interpretation of a particular document--an account by Zacconi,⁴⁵ in which he has stated that the Imperiale was built nineteen years after the Palazzo Prefettizio of Pesaro.⁴⁶ Since the villa date, as confirmed by the impresa, had traditionally been accepted as 1469, Marchini interprets the abovementioned document as an attempt by Zacconi to define an unknown date in reference to one generally believed correct.⁴⁷ Most scholars, therefore, regarded 1469 as the certain date, and argued over that of the Palazzo Prefettizio. Marchini, conversely, chooses 1450 as the verifiable one, and maintains that both structures originated at the same time, and from the same architect.

Giorgio da Sebenico's role as a tentative candidate for the position depends on Marchini's theory of the Palazzo Prefettizio architect, the town palace being the archetype in this argument, and the Sforza villa essentially a variation on, or interpretation of, the theme (Fig. 5). A brief resumé of Marchini's thesis is as follows:⁴⁸ accepting Giorgio as the Schiavone to which Vasari refers in his life of Brunelleschi,⁴⁹ one possesses a piece of tangible evidence from which to develop the hypotheses--a letter written from the court of Urbino, to Siena, indicating that Giorgio Schiavo was in the service of Federico da Montefeltro in 1466.⁵⁰ At that time, he was probably working on the Palazzo Ducale, his contribution now being overshadowed by Luciano da Laurana's programme, initiated only a short time later. Marchini, knowing that Laurana had been in

the service of Alessandro Sforza in 1465, before he was requested by Federico da Montefeltro in 1466, suggests that Giorgio's case might be similarly construed--i.e. he, too, might have been in Alèssandro's service before being installed at the court of Urbino. Accepting this possibility, it is suggested he worked on the Palazzo Prefettizio during his attendance in Pesaro. In support of this hypothetical reconstruction, Marchini notes that two windows along a minor facade are framed by pilasters with late-gothic capitals, indicative of a building period pre-dating Laurana's work in the Urbino palace. Furthermore, the pilasters are decorated with a late-gothic ornamental vocabulary, reminiscent of the kind favoured by Maso di Bartolommeo, one of the Urbinate architects of the pre-Laurana era.

Marchini extends this proposition to suggest that Giorgio worked also on the Villa Imperiale. The close relationship existing between these two structures is exemplified by the main entrance ways (Figs. 6 and 7), their aspect of classical formality varied by encircling bands of leaves. The cortile of the villa (Fig. 10) expresses a certain legerity in the rhythm of its arches, which recalls that kind of Early Renaissance sensibility probably evident in the Urbino palace complex at the time of Maso di Bartolommeo. Marchini detects in the Imperiale suggestions of the same Venetian late-gothic spirit seen in the ornament of the Palazzo Prefettizio--for instance, the capitals of the now-closed cortile loggia; the Sforza impresa on the pozzo; the external projections of the fireplaces; and on the interior, the decoration of the fireplaces, and of some wood-beam ceilings.

Whether or not Marchini's theory is entirely acceptable,

and he himself states it has yet to stand the test of time, he has correctly indicated that an examination of the Palazzo Prefettizio is pertinent to an analysis of the Villa Imperiale. The reason for this, as mentioned above, is that the town palace, and its tentative architect, have been the subject of the majority of historical studies in question. The town palace can therefore provide one with the frame of reference and points of contact to extend to the Sforza villa; the Imperiale had usually been accepted and understood in terms of what it immediately revealed--a structure having the same entrance way as the Palazzo Prefettizio, and displaying an impresa dated 1468(9).

Speculation on the identity of the town palace architect began when Antonio Bertolotti, in 1889, published the following letter:

Ex. D. Alessandro Sforza.

Mag. ce ecc. La V.S. sa che per sua litera questi dì la ne p(re)g(a)ve ge volessemo mandare maestro Luciano per haverlo a consiglio e parere suo circha quelle sue fabriche et che non lo riteneria se non pochi zorni et cusi nui de la bono voglia per farle cosa grata lo lassassemo venire et perchè nel vero al presente habiamo gran bisogno de la presentia sua p(re)gamo la pref. S.V. che, secondo la promessa sua le ce lo voglia mandare che la ce ne farà singulare piacere e contentamento e quanto più presto la il lassará venir tanto ne farà cosa più grata perchè senza di lui siamo impacciati per alcune cose ne accadeno. A li piaceri de la p(re)f(a)ta S.V. se offerimo di continuo paratissimi.

Mantua, 8 Maij 1465. 51

Von Fabriczy read this letter in the sense of the Gonzaga of Mantua requesting the services of Laurana, architect of Pesaro, from Alessandro Sforza. 52 He followed by saying

that the Palazzo Prefettizio must then be the work of Luciano da Laurana. In 1904, Cornelio Budinich correctly interpreted the letter, and published two more, thus forming a trio of documents pertinent to this particular event.⁵³ The first, cited above, is directed from Mantua to Pesaro, asking Alessandro to return Laurana, his services having been requested for a few days (pochi zorni) only. The second, of the same date, is from Mantua to Laurana, recommending him to return at once. The last is Laurana's reply, nine days later. Since the first letter implies that Laurana was in Pesaro only briefly, for consiglio e parere, most historians, with the exception of von Fabriczy, Filippini-Bonini and Patzak,⁵⁴ have denied him the role of acting architect for the town palace. Laurana's contribution, or non-contribution, remained the point of contention until Marchini advanced the name of Giorgio da Sebenico.

More popular and frequent than arguments centering on the tentative architect, have been the descriptions of the Palazzo Prefettizio. Common to all is the emphasis on the irregularity of the facade as a whole, and on the incongruity of component elements.⁵⁵ Marchini, in support of the late-Gothic Giorgio da Sebenico attribution, talks of "tutta l'irrazionalità medievale del tessuto struttivo del suo porticato."⁵⁶ Salmi's analysis is definite, and pertinent, therefore probably the most valuable of the various descriptions:

"Il porticato terreno è infatti piuttosto depresso, di una proporzione non certo lauranesca ma da collegare genericamente ad echi albertiani ed ha pilastri a bugne assai primordiali. Nè è brunelleschiano--come vuole il Budinich--il motivo dei medaglioni nei pennacchi perchè interpretato con altra sensibilità, anch'essa orientata verso l'Alberti."

Although he does not draw any conclusion from it, Salmi has indicated the underlying current defining the architectural vocabulary of the Palazzo Prefettizio--essentially, it is that of an Albertian approach to architecture. This association is substantiated both by the interpretation of various architectural concepts, and by the architects whose names have previously been advanced as the designers of the town palace--Luciano da Laurana and Giorgio da Sebenico.

Marchini, in describing certain decorative motifs and architectural members of the two Pesaro structures, connected Giorgio's name with that of Maso di Bartolommeo. Before he was active in Urbino, Maso worked on a commission for the Tempio Malatestiano.⁵⁸ Giorgio was also there, in 1451, in charge of supplying the marble.⁵⁹

Although the first mention of Laurana's name is in the Mantuan letter of 8 May 1465, one presumes that he had been in Mantua for an indefinite period prior to that date. He probably met Alberti there, who came to the city in 1459-60, to prepare the model for S. Sebastiano, and returned again in 1463.⁶⁰

Examined in the light of an Albertian architectural vocabulary, the pieces begin to fit together, literally. The portico with rusticated piers at street level (Fig. 5) has been a source of disturbance to art historians describing it. Marchini considers the rustication unique, and not necessarily an anachronism of Mannerist architecture.⁶¹ Salmi simply describes the piers as "primordial".⁶² Although most scholars have preferred to avoid this aspect of the problem, Marchini suggests a prototype. The theory depends on a possible visit by Giorgio

to Florence, where he could have been inspired by the piers between the windows of the Palazzo Pitti facade.⁶³ This suggestion is certainly an attractive one, in so far as the tactile quality of the rusticated pier is involved. Both Marchini and Salmi agree that the scale, and rhythm, of the town palace portico is indebted to an Albertian precedent-- Marchini suggests the arcade along the side facade of the Tempio Malatestiano.⁶⁴

The main entrance way (Fig. 7) provides further indication of an initial Florentine-Albertian inspiration. The concept of an entrance defined only by mouldings is not widespread at this time, although a version thereof can be seen in the Palazzo Rucellai and S. Maria Novella. The facade of S. Miniato might have provided Alberti with a precedent for this element.

One can take the Florentine association even beyond this superficial level. The majesty and solidity inherent in the proportions of the Pesaro doorway (Fig. 7) are curiously contradicted by bands of leaves tying the jambs. Scholars have interpreted this in essentially two ways--as a simple divisioning of the jambs, and as decoration applied in the sense of gothic botanical motifs.⁶⁵ A preference for the gothic characterization is consistent with Marchini's theory that Giorgio da Sebenico was the designer.⁶⁶ Salmi prefers to remark on the similarity of the Pesaro motif to the articulation of the pilasters inside the Tempio Malatestiano.⁶⁷ In both cases, however, the effect or sensation of the visual impact is neglected. A third interpretation is possible, whereby these bands of leaves perform a subtle and consciously disturbing

function. They create a paradox when one realizes the absurdity of mere leaves exerting, or maintaining, a hold over powerful architectural members; the overall impression being, however, that without them the entire doorway would collapse.

Visual precedents have been offered by Salmi and Marchini; in terms of sensational impact one might turn to a Donatellian type of artistic humour, which possesses enough audacious wit to ensure the disturbing subtlety of such an element. For example, Donatello's niche of S. Ludovico on Orsanmichele (Figs. 8 and 9) have the same effect as the Pesaro doorway, although the means by which it is achieved are different. In this case, the architecture does not threaten to fall apart, but rather the niche, by means of strands of cut rope beneath it, is on the verge of sliding out of its space on top of the spectator.

The medallions in the spandrels of the Palazzo Prefettizio arcade have been interpreted by Budinich as a Brunelleschian, and by Salmi as an Albertian, motif. Comparing those of the Pesaro structure to those, for example, of the Florence Ospedale degli Innocenti, one realizes that the Sforza architect, unlike Brunelleschi, has omitted the final medallions--the result is a noticeably different rhythm. Yet a distribution of medallions similar to that on the Palazzo Prefettizio arcade can be seen on the side facade of the Tempio Malatestiano in Rimini.

Serra, in his discussion of the Pesaro palace,⁶⁸ decided that the incongruity of the rusticated arcade at ground level and the Renaissance windows on the piano nobile, indicated that the structure was a cumulative effort. This incongruity, however, is disturbing only when considered as an abstract concept. If

one examines the facade, one sees that the introduction of a wide attic relieves the possibility of too radical a contrast. Similar application of a broad attic for the purpose of subtle transition has frequently been praised in Alberti's facade of S. Maria Novella. ⁶⁹

In an early monograph on Pesaro, Giulio Vaccaj had already remarked that the association between the Palazzo Prefettizio and the Villa Imperiale did not stop with the related entrance portals--it penetrated into the cortile of the Sforza villa. ⁷⁰ Expansion of Vaccaj's observation should serve to convince one that a relationship between the two Pesaro structures is more plausible than one involving an early, unspecified Florentine villa, as Patzak suggests. The arch of the Imperiale cortile has a wide span and rests on a comparatively short and slender column (Fig. 10); although the component parts are necessarily more massive, the proportion of the arch unit in terms of height to width (essentially a ratio of 1:1) appears again in the town palace portico (Fig. 11). Patzak describes the capitals in the villa cortile as Early Renaissance; ⁷¹ however, at least four (Fig. 12) correspond in design to those Alberti innovated for the second storey of the Palazzo Rucellai (Fig. 13), ⁷² and which reappear frequently in the works of Alberti's followers. The peducci inside the town palace portico are essentially a variation of a similar design (Fig. 14). The wide attic of the Palazzo Prefettizio facade reappears in the cortile of the villa, but it no longer serves the functional purpose it did in the town palace--the intercolumniation of the arcade and of the now-closed upper loggia was the same.

The evidence derived from an analysis of the Palazzo Prefettizio, and from a juxtaposition of the two Pesaro structures is conclusive in at least two aspects--that the architect of the Palazzo Prefettizio was familiar with Alberti's approach to architecture; and that the designer of the town palace was not the acting architect of the Villa Imperiale. In view of the circa nineteen years separating the structures, if he had been the same architect, one would expect to see the cortile as developed, and not simply adapted and transposed, from the town palace prototype (note the "blind" wide attic in the villa). The situation in such a case would have been comparable to Alberti's successive reformulations of the triumphal arch church facade, from the first expression at Rimini, to the final statement in S. Andrea. As it is, the circumstance rather resembles that of Bernardo Rossellino, transferring the Palazzo Rucellai facade to the Palazzo Piccolomini of Pienza.

The principal issue is to identify the Palazzo Prefettizio architect. Further research and documentary evidence might yet prove that he was responsible for the design of the Villa Imperiale, although it is improbable that he carried it out himself.⁷³ Essentially three factors are involved in this process of identification--those of time, geography, and architectural precedents, particularly in regard to motifs.

Zacconi was probably correct when he intimated the Palazzo Prefettizio was begun c1450. Alessandro's lordship over Pesaro was officially confirmed in 1447, and it seems only logical to assume that a town palace, along with city fortifications, would be one of the earliest major building campaigns a ruler would undertake.⁷⁴ By 1460, construction was sufficiently advanced

to accomodate the wedding ceremony of Battista Sforza and Federico da Montefeltro.⁷⁵ The final cornice was ordered in 1465, indicating a termination date for the exterior at least.⁷⁶ The crucial period, of design and initial construction, should therefore be relegated to the years 1450-55.

Due to the mobility of the architects during that period, the precise geographical context is less easily defined. The possible choices, however, can validly be restricted by applying the factor of the architectural motif precedent. Examined from this angle, two areas come into consideration--Rimini and Mantua.

The obvious point of contact in Rimini is the Tempio Malatestiano. Alberti provided the design in 1450, and entrusted the execution to Matteo de'Pasti, in collaboration with Matteo Nuti. Construction is documented still in progress as late as 1462, and indeed, the facade was never completed.

Present research, however, has not revealed any post-Rimini architectural pursuits by the principal figures engaged, which could provide a relationship, in terms of either similarity or development, with the Pesaro structure.⁷⁷ The association between the Tempio Malatestiano and the Palazzo Prefettizio, if acceptable, began in Rimini and ended there, subsequent applicable works being simply variations on the theme, and therefore redundant in either of the abovementioned terms. Ultimately, then, the relationship is to be sought with Alberti, and not only with the Tempio Malatestiano.

Mantua proves to be a more relevant context. Ludovico Gonzaga commissioned Alberti to build two churches, which subsequently became major statements in his development of

the triumphal arch church facade--S. Sebastiano and S. Andrea. As usual, Alberti provided only the plans, and chose as his executing architect Luca Fancelli, a Florentine who resided in Mantua from 1450-94.

As of yet, Fancelli's personal style is difficult to formulate, since his best known and securely attributed works involve the interpretation of another architect's designs--specifically those of Alberti. His relationship with Luca Fancelli appeared to be a close one. In the words of Vasari:

"Fu esecutore de'disegni e modelli di Leon Batista Salvestro Fancelli fiorentino [Il Vasari qui non si rammentò che nella Vita del Brunellesco chiama Luca, e non Silvestro, il Fancelli; e Luca è il vero suo nome ...], architetto e scultore ragionevole; il quale condusse, secondo il voler di detto Leon Batista, tutte l'opere che fece fare in Firenze, con giudizio e diligenza straordinaria: ed in quelli di Mantova, un Luca fiorentino [Qui il Vasari fa del Fancelli due persone diverse, chiamandolo ora Silvestro ed ora Luca]" 78

Although his activity during and subsequent to S. Sebastiano is well documented, nothing is known of Luca Fancelli during those crucial (from the point of view of Pesaro) years between 1450 and 1455. Could he have been on leave to accept commissions elsewhere--in Pesaro perhaps?

Different aspects of Fancelli's initial development and architectural vocabulary encourage such a theory. He was a Florentine, and his background must necessarily have involved intimate familiarity with contemporary local artists and their work--one remembers the Donatellian aspect of the Pesaro doorways. Furthermore, it was remarked that the essential articulation of the Pesaro entrances--i.e. restricted to mould-

ings--was not common at that time. In its fifteenth century context it is, of course, originally an Albertian motif. It appears again, in all its Albertian clarity of design, in Luca Fancelli's doors to either side of the S. Sebastiano central entrance (Fig. 15).⁷⁹ In the Camera degli Sposi of the Castel S. Giorgio, the door and the fireplace are attributed to Fancelli;⁸⁰ since he was responsible for these major pieces of interior decoration, could one not extend the attribution to include the peducci (Fig. 16)? They exhibit the same Albertian form noted before in the peducci of the Pesaro town palace, and in the cortile of the Villa Imperiale. The proportions of the Palazzo Prefettizio arcade and the medallions in the spandrels were earlier examined in reference to the Rimini structure. Considering the close working relationship between Alberti and Fancelli, is it not probable that Fancelli was familiar with the designs for the Tempio Malatestiano? After all, the Palazzo Prefettizio does not depend on any one structure for a precedent, but remains essentially a composite of motifs from various sources.

The theory of Fancelli's Pesaro activity is an attractive one, and, if acceptable, would serve a dual purpose--it would provide a candidate for the architect of the Palazzo Prefettizio, and it would erase the obscurity of the first five years of Fancelli's Mantuan career. The Villa Imperiale could very easily have been designed during the period 1450-55; yet in view of not only the stylistic analysis, but also the historical evidence presented earlier, the construction period should be advanced to 1469, when Frederick III "vi buttò una pietra di sua

mano, e volse che il Palazzo che il sig. Alessandro aveva
dato ordine di fare si chiamasse Imperiale, e così si è
sempre nominato." ⁸¹

Footnotes: Chapter I

1. I have found mention of such documents in only one secondary source, and am anticipating searching through the Biblioteca Oliveriana of Pesaro for verification and/or more of the same. See Francesco Filippini, "Luciano da Laurana a Pesaro," Melozzo da Forlì, April 1939, p. 356. In 1444, Alessandro Sforza married Costanza da Varano, only daughter of Galeazzo Malatesta, Lord of Pesaro. Alessandro subsequently gained control of Pesaro, partly by way of Costanza's dowry, and partly through funds paid on his behalf by his brother, Francesco. In 1445 he had to defend the city against an attack by Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta; in 1447 the two parties involved arrived at an agreement, and Alessandro assumed full possession of Pesaro. Various sources have stated that Alessandro built the Villa Imperiale on the site of an older Malatesta villa, named Casartole. See Giulio Vaccaj, Pesaro, Bergamo, 1909, p. 55; James Dennistoun, Memoirs of the Dukes of Urbino, Vol. II, London, 1909, p. 49; Mario Zuffa, Pesaro, Milan, n.d., p. 65. Since Pesaro and its possessions were ceded to Alessandro as the result of what one would call a transaction, rather than as the booty of conquest, it is possible that some records or documents do exist, which mention or describe Casartole. These, in turn, might help to ascertain whether Alessandro incorporated any pre-existing fabric into the Imperiale; and also whether Casartole in any way influenced the site or position of the Sforza villa.
2. Giuseppe Marchini, La Villa Imperiale di Pesaro, Florence, [1968], p. 6. See also idem., "Il Problema dell'Imperiale," Commentari, XIX, 1968, p. 66, n. 11. Ludovico Zacconi is mentioned in only three other secondary sources: Giuseppe Ignazio Montanari, L'Imperiale di Pesaro. Stanze, Pesaro, 1838, p. 43; Giulio Vaccaj, Pesaro, Pesaro, 1909, pp. 74 and 76; Filippini-Bonini, "Il Palazzo Sforzesco di Pesaro," Rassegna Marchigiana, II, 1923-4, p. 6.

3. Annibale Olivieri degli Abati, Memorie di Alessandro Sforza Signore di Pesaro, Pesaro, 1785, p. CIII. See Bernhard Patzak, Die Villa Imperiale in Pesaro, Leipzig, 1908, Chapter One, n. 8. Of the three chroniclers mentioned in Olivieri's passage, I could trace only two. Gozze is referred to by Dennistoun, II, p. 72, n. 2, who also describes him as a contemporary--see *ibid.*, pp. 157 and 228. Lodovico Muratori (1672-1750) is renowned for several historical tomes, among them Gli Annali d'Italia, which are possibly the annali to which Olivieri refers. Of Sepolcro (p. 2, bottom quarter) I found no other mention.
4. For the dates offered by various historians as the initial building date of the Villa Imperiale, see Pompeo Mancini, L'Imperiale, villa de'sforzeschi e rovereschi a breve distanza da Pesaro, Pesaro, 1844, p. 8; Vanzolini, Guida di Pesaro, Pesaro, 1864, p. 179 (see also Tonini, n. 9 below); Henry Thode, "Ein fürstlicher Sommeraufenthalt in der Zeit der Hochrenaissance," Jahrbuch der königlichen preussischen Kunstsammlungen, IX, 1888, p. 166; Fritz Seitz, "Die Villa Imperiale bei Pesaro," Deutsche Bauzeitung, XXXIX, no. 75, 20 September 1905, p. 454; Patzak, pp. 3-4 and 75; Vaccaj, Bergamo, pp. 548-50 and 55; Filippini, 1939, p. 356; Luigi Firpo, Lo Stato ideale della Controriforma, Bari, 1957, p. 71 (see also Tonini, n. 9 below).
5. See B. Buser, Die Beziehungen der Mediceer zu Frankreich während der Jahre 1434 bis 1494 in ihrem Zusammenhange mit den allgemeinen Verhältnissen, Leipzig, 1879, p. 48.
6. See Ludwig von Pastor, Geschichte der Päpste, I, Freiburg, 1901, p. 479.
7. See Buser, p. 57.
8. Patzak makes no mention of this, and Marchini, La Villa

- 8 (cont'd) Imperiale, p. 5, states that according to the biography by Aeneas Silvius, Frederick did not return after 1452.
9. See Pastor, op. cit., II, p. 421, and corresponding note: "Tonini V 329, wo 1468 statt 1464 zu lesen ist." Perhaps Vanzolini and Firpo (see n. 4 above) based their dating of the Imperiale on Tonini's account, or on a source common to all three.
10. See Pastor, II, p. 427, n. 3.
11. Vespasiano da Bisticci, Vite di Uomini Illustri del secolo XV, rivedute sui manoscritti da Ludovico Frati, I, Bologna, 1892, p. 328. This must refer to Frederick's second Italian journey, since cf. Pastor, II, p. 427: "Hier wie in Rom teilte Friedrich III. zahlreiche Ehrendiplome aus, was sich dann auf der ganzen Rückreise wiederholte."
12. Mancini, p. 16; Thode, p. 1666
13. Seitz, p. 454.
14. Giuseppe Marchini, "Per Giorgio da Sebenico," Commentari, XIX, 1968, p. 219; Patzak, p. 62.
15. Admittedly, though, he includes him in his bibliographic footnote on p. 453.
16. Seitz, p. 454.
17. Annibale Olivieri degli Abati, Sopra un medaglione non ancora osservato di Costanzo Sforza, Pesaro, 1781, p. VIII. See also Patzak, pp. 52-3.

18. See Olivieri, n. 17 above.
19. Chapter Two, n. 4.
20. See Patzak, p. 75.
21. Bates Lowry, Renaissance Architecture, New York, 1971, p. 30.
22. In 1522, Genga began a restoration of the Sforza villa for Francesco Maria della Rovere. It is assumed that, with the exception of the now-closed south wall, he left the arcade of the cortile more or less as it was. See Patzak, pp. 11-2 and 73-5.
23. See Patzak, ns. 28 and 39 below. See also idem., pp. 5 and 73. Although the concept of the separated structures might be important in terms of Patzak's villa evolution, I do not think it is equally significant in regard to the function of the villa.
24. See Patzak, p. 6; Vaccaj, Bergamo, p. 56; Filippini, 1939, p. 356; Marchini, "Per Giorgio", p. 219; but cf. Thode, p. 166: "Alessandro Sforza war es, der zur Zeit seiner Herrschaft in Pesaro, ... sich einen Lustsitz gründete."
25. Vaccaj, Bergamo, p. 58, where he is referring to Olivieri's account of the Sforza medal in "Sopra un medaglione", p. VIII. Vaccaj corrects Olivieri's conclusions by reference to the seventeenth century Minguzzi drawing of the Imperiale (Fig. 3). The problem in this case is whether or not the area around the Imperiale was used in 1474 (date of the medal), as it apparently was when Minguzzi did his drawing. Vaccaj is not too clear on this point, and it might be that he

- 25 (con'd) has neglected to take into account that the two descriptions are almost 150 years apart. Cf. Mancini, p. 19.
26. The existence of this wood, presumably for hunting even in the days of the Sforza, is suggested by the will of Giovanni Sforza, dated 24 July 1510. It is cited by Patzak, Chapter One, n. 33: "Codex Oliveriana Nr. 443, p. 456: '... il palazzo dell'imperiale con le possessioni e selva intorno ...'"
27. Seitz, p. 454.
28. Ibid., p. 454; Patzak, p. 5.
29. Seitz, p. 453.
30. Patzak, p. 6.
31. Ibid., pp. 117-8.
32. Ibid.
33. Essentially, Patzak's evaluation of the Imperiale as displaying irregular proportions derives from examining it as a two storey structure. Beneath the villa, however, is a large subterranean space, and considering this played an important part in its original context, it should be regarded as an integral part of the whole unit. If the structure is examined from this point of view, I think one will find some quite rational systems of proportion. For the time being, one has only the unsatisfactory plans of Buonamici to work from, and since they are frequently unreliable, one does not like to draw any ultimate conclusions from them. A

- 33 (cont'd) new set of plans are needed. Seitz provides one "bird's-eye view", which is probably more accurate than any of Buonamici's efforts. Basing one's calculations on this drawing (Fig. 2), it is found, for instance, that the pozzo, which has always been regarded as strangely off-centre, is actually the central point of the villa unit.
34. Patzak, p. 72.
35. Ibid., pp. 76-7.
36. Medagliere n. 8440, Museo Oliveriano, Pesaro. By Gianfrancesco di LucaENZOLA, active 1456-78. Between 1473-5, ENZOLA was engaged on a series of commemorative medals for Alessandro and Costanzo Sforza. On the whole, his reverse designs are not praised as particularly accurate or successful. See Cornelius von Fabriczy, Medaillen der italienischen Renaissance, Leipzig, 1903, p. 47; Ulrich Thieme and Felix Becker, Allgemeines Lexikon der Bildenden Künstler von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart, Leipzig, 1907-50, --entry for ENZOLA.
37. Olivieri, 1781, p. VIII.
38. Patzak, Chapter One, n. 8.
39. Patzak, p. 73.
40. Patzak, realizing the medal is not necessarily accurate, maintains that the original disposition of the separate building units can still be determined from the plan of the villa--this, again, is a further contradiction of his theory about the Early Renaissance characteristics of the cortile. See Patzak, p. 73.
41. James Ackerman, "Sources of the Renaissance Villa," Acts

- 41 (cont'd) of the Twentieth International Congress of the History of Art. Studies in Western Art II: The Renaissance and Mannerism, Princeton, 1963, p. 9.
42. Marchini, "Per Giorgio."
43. Patzak does mention the name of one tentative architect, in passing, but excuses himself on the grounds of lack of documentary evidence. See *idem.*, p. 76.
44. Marchini, "Per Giorgio," n. 13. See also n. 8 above.
45. See n. 2 above.
46. See also Vaccàj, Bergamo, pp. 48-50.
47. See Marchini, La Villa Imperiale, p. 6.
48. From Marchini, "Per Giorgio," pp. 212-5 and 218-22.
49. Cf. Thieme-Becker on Giorgio da Sebenico: "Eine Tochter G.'s war mit dem Maler Giorgio Schiavona verheiratet."
50. See G. Franceschini, Saggi di storia montefeltresca e urbinata, Selci Umbro, 1957, p. 84, n. 44.
51. Cited from Cornelio Budinich, Il Palazzo Ducale d'Urbino, Trieste, 1904, p. 51.
52. Cornelius von Fabriczy, "Luciano da Laurana e il palazzo prefettizio di Pesaro," Archivio storico dell'arte, 1890, pp. 239-40.

53. See Budinich, pp. 50-1.
54. Statements by the various historians in compiled in: Mario Salmi, Piero della Francesca e il Palazzo Ducale d'Urbino, Florence, 1945, pp. 126-7, n. 103. Cf. Patzak, p. 5: "Der städtische Palast ist, wie Budinich nachgewiesen hat, im Jahre 1465 von Luciano da Laurana aufgeführt worden."
55. See Budinich, p. 54; L. Serra, L'Arte nelle Marche, II, Rome, 1934, p. 26; cf. Filippini, 1939, p. 352.
56. Marchini, "Per Giorgio," p. 218.
57. Salmi, pp. 126-7, n. 103.
58. See Thieme-Becker for Maso di Bartolommeo.
59. See Marchini, "Per Giorgio," p. 218 and n. 12.
60. See G. Pacchioni, "L'opera di Luciano da Laurana a Mantova," Bollettino d'Arte, III, 1923-4, p. 108.
61. Marchini, "Per Giorgio," p. 218.
62. Salmi, pp. 126-7, n. 103.
63. Marchini, "Per Giorgio," p. 218. The validity of this suggestion is difficult to ascertain since the dates for Palazzo Pitti nucleus vary considerably. In the entry for Luca Fancelli, Thieme-Becker give as possible dates, c1446 and post-1450, and state that by 1469 the original

- 63 (cont'd) block was still incomplete. Lowry, fig. 14, states it was designed cl440; Nikolaus Pevsner, An Outline of European Architecture, Harmondsworth, 1943, p. 191, suggests cl446 and cl458.
64. See Salmi, pp. 126-7, n. 103; Marchini, "Per Giorgio," p. 218.
65. See Budinich, p. 54; Patzak, p. 60.
66. In Giorgio's portal of S. Francesco, Ancona, the columns are articulated with horizontal bands, which, visually, can be related to the Pesaro entrances, but which, in terms of effect, do not come anywhere near them. See Touring Club Italiano, Attraverso l'Italia. Nuova Serie. Marche, Milan, 1971, fig. 184. Was Giorgio inspired by the facade of S. Maria della Piazza (1210-25), *ibid.*, fig. 155?
67. Salmi, pp. 126-7, n. 103.
68. Serra, pp. 26ff.
69. See Rudolf Wittkower, "Alberti's Approach to Antiquity in Architecture," Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes, vol. 4, 1941, pp. 9-10.
70. Vaccaj, Bergamo, p. 56; also Filippini, 1939, p. 356. But cf. Patzak, p. 79.
71. Patzak, pp. 62-4.
72. See Frederick Hartt, Italian Renaissance Art, New York, n.d., p. 187; Pevsner, p. 193.

73. I feel that Patzak (pp. 77-9) underestimates the harmony, and the rational and consistent proportions evident in the villa (see n. 33 above), which points to a mind that appreciated the Albertian concern with, and application of, a system of ratios. Perhaps the villa was constructed by maestri di muro, as Filippini (1939, p. 356) suggests in his thesis advancing Laurana as the designer of the Imperiale.

74. See Vaccaj, Bergamo, p. 56. See also Francesco Filippini, "Melozzo e gli Sforza," Melozzo da Forlì, January 1938, XVI, no. 2, p. 61.

75. See Filippini, *ibid.*, for more chronological details of important events recorded in the Palazzo Prefettizio.

76. See Filippini, 1939, p. 352; Marchini, "Per Giorgio," p. 213.

77. Matteo de'Pasti's work remained principally small scale and decorative. Matteo Nuti was more ambitious--his major structure is the Malatesta Library at Cesena, modelled on that of Michelozzo for San Marco. Nuti designed a doorway for S. Michele in Fano, which resembles the Pesaro villa entrance only in terms of the square tablet over the entablature. On the other hand, a similar composition is seen in the Palazzo Rucellai, if one will admit the transformation of a window into an impresa or plaque. Agostino di Duccio, a third major figure associated with Rimini is perhaps best known for the facade of S. Bernardino in Perugia, which remains in essence a composite of the Tempio Malatestiano motifs.

78. Giorgio Vasari, Le Vite, II, ed. Milanese, Florence, 1878, pp. 545-6.

79. See Wittkower, pp. 12-4.

80. See entry for Fancelli in Dizionario Enciclopedico di Architettura e Urbanistica, Rome, 1968-9.
81. Olivieri, 1785, p. CIII.

CHAPTER II: THE VILLA IMPERIALE FRESCOES

In his will, Giovanni Sforza, grandson of Alessandro, wrote, that upon extinction of the Sforza direct male line, the Villa Imperiale and its grounds were to pass to the convent of S. Bartolo in Pesaro. Giovanni's son, Costanzo II, died in 1512, without an heir. Pope Julius II took advantage of this opportunity to step in and appropriate Pesaro, along with the Villa Imperiale, for his nephew, Francesco Maria della Rovere, Duke of Urbino. An illegitimate son of Costanzo I still survived; he had been considered an obvious and popular choice as the next ruler of Pesaro, but Julius II managed to have him bought off with an annuity. The question of the Villa Imperiale legacy was solved simply by ignoring the claims of S. Bartolo.¹

It was during Francesco Maria's rule, more precisely the 1520's and 1530's, that the Villa Imperiale underwent the metamorphosis from a fifteenth century country estate to a Renaissance villa. This transformation was achieved basically in two campaigns, involving the painting, with a fresco cycle, of eight piano nobile rooms in the Sforza villa, and the building of an entirely new structure immediately behind the older one. It is the former project which will be treated in this chapter.

Francesco Maria's occupation of Pesaro did not proceed without interruption. When Leo X ascended the Papal Chair, after the death of Jubius II in 1513, Francesco Maria was initally permitted to retain the various offices conferred upon him by his uncle. It was not long, however, before the first indication of Medici politics occurred, which ultimately resulted in dissension between the two families of that genera-

tion--Francesco Maria was replaced by Leo's brother, Giuliano, as Captain General of the Church. When Giuliano died in 1516, and Leo produced another substitute--his nephew Lorenzo--Francesco Maria refused to co-operate any longer in his subordinate position. He was called to Rome to excuse his misconduct, but, fearing possible strategic detainment by Leo, sent instead his foster mother, Elisabetta da Montefeltro, to plead his cause. The Pope did not appreciate this tactic, and responded by stripping him of his titles and possessions, and finally excommunicating him. Lorenzo de'Medici was made Duke of Urbino, and Francesco Maria was forced to flee with his family to Mantua.

In 1517, he assembled an army of mercenaries to attempt a siege on Urbino. Although this particular attack was not successful, Francesco Maria retaliated by vanquishing the enemy at Pesaro. The battle, fought in May of that year, was concentrated in and around the Villa Imperiale. War between the two families continued until early 1518. A treaty was subsequently drawn up, by which terms Lorenzo retained possession of the Dukedom of Urbino, and Francesco Maria was compensated by what were obviously only temporarily satisfying conditions--he was absolved from ecclesiastical censure, and was permitted to carry with him to Mantua, Duke Federico's furniture, artillery and library.

When Lorenzo died in 1519, the Duchy of Urbino passed to the Holy See. Leo X died on 10 December 1521, at which point Francesco Maria reclaimed his lands.

The progress of work on the Villa Imperiale for the period immediately following Francesco Maria's reoccupation is difficult to gauge with chronological precision or clarity, let alone

absolute certainty. The paucity of documents in the early 1520's (and the obscurity of extant ones) is augmented only by Vasari in his life of Girolamo Genga:

Essendo poi ritornato il duca nello stato, se ne tornò anco Girolamo, e da esso fu trattenuto e adoperato per architetto, e nel restaurare un palazzo vecchio e farli giunta d'altra [alta?] torre nel monte dell'Imperiale sopra Pesaro Fecevi poi la torre alta centoventi piedi, con tredici scale di legno da salirvi sopra, accomodate tanto bene, e nascoste nelle mura, che si ritirano di solaro in solaro agevolmente; il che rende quella torre fortissima e maravigliosa. 2

A document verifying Vasari's statement that Genga entered the service of the Duke of Urbino as architect in 1522, is a letter written 4 August that year, for Genga by Francesco Maria's agent in Rome, Giovan Maria della Porta. 3 Confusion starts when one attempts to determine the commencement of work on the Pesaro villa. 4 Furthermore, and this is perhaps the most important aspect of the problem, the exact character of the earliest work on the Imperiale remains to be ascertained. 5

The document chronologically subsequent to Genga's letter of introduction, is one written by the architect to Francesco Maria on 8 March 1523--it is concerned with commissions in the Palazzo Ducale of Urbino. 6 Seven more letters are extant from the year 1523. Six of these are from either Genga or the Rome agent, and are accounts of various art objects and pieces of marble which Genga was procuring for Francesco Maria in Rome. 7 Although their ultimate destination is not named, one presumes they were being collected for the Palazzo Ducale of Urbino, certainly Francesco Maria's principal and grandest residence of that time. 8

The seventh letter was written on 4 September 1523 by

Aloyse Muccioli, a Pesarese agent for the Duke of Urbino.⁹ Muccioli refers to a "pictore e'l scoltore novamente venuti che staranno bene," and mentions that "lunidi proximi m.ro hier.mo gli à hordinato el lavor anno à comenzare e cosi seguiteranno." In view of the fact that the remainder of the letter deals with the gardener of the Villa Imperiale, it is possible that the first part, from which the above extracts are taken, refers to the same villa. Filippini¹⁰Baldani refutes this by maintaining that the rooms were not yet ready for decoration.¹⁰ Patzak likes the idea of an early, that is pre-1530, decorative programme, but believes Muccioli's letter inconclusive.¹¹

An attempt to reconstruct the work pattern of the restorations should indicate the validity of the date, September 1523, in the context suggested by the letter. If acceptable, the reconstruction will explain and justify the presence of a "pictore e'l scoltore" at that early date.

The implication in Muccioli's letter is that Genga had certainly initiated, and was probably already advanced in, the repair and restoration of the villa. The possible work period can only be deduced by a process of elimination--since existing documents have accounted for the presence of Genga elsewhere than in Pesaro from March to August 1523, he must have been active in the Imperiale between August 1522 and March 1523, and/or from August 1523 on.

According to Vasari, restoration was concentrated in the area of the tower and its staircase. In 1523, then, the tower stair would have been the principal access to the piano nobile, while the entrance in the west wing, where the present main

stair is located, would still be the original one, leading to the stables in the subterranean area.¹² In such a situation, it is logical to assume that any rooms or areas to be restored would be those adjacent to the tower (and the principal stair of the time)--concentration of labour and materials was time and cost saved. In fact, there are two rooms to the north and north-west of the tower, the present Sala Grande and Sala della Calunnia, (Figs. 35 and 37), which are the only ones of the eight-room cycle to possess a flat, panelled ceiling--that is, the original ceiling form.¹³ The "pictore e'l scoltore" of Muccioli's letter very likely worked on the panels and stucco of these two ceilings.

It becomes apparent now that the project for the Sforza villa decoration must be subdivided into two programmes, the panelled ceilings being a vestige of the earliest one. When was the first project abandoned for the present decorative cycle? One is unfortunately denied both a terminus post and ante quem for the campaigns, since there are no more letters until 30 July 1527.¹⁴ The next document relevant to the Villa Imperiale, however, does not appear until 27 January 1528, as a letter written by Genga to Leonora:

... et dipoi me ha ordinato quanto abbia ad esequire
e la prima e'l maggiore importantia me à inposto ch'io
facci asettare tutte le stantie di V. Ex.tia. non solo
in Pesaro, ma anco in fosombrone et con ogni cellerità
possibile¹⁵

Clearly, the final project is underway. Genga is being pressured to finish "tutte le stantie ... in Pesaro." Since the Villa Imperiale was Francesco Maria's major commission in that city, one can safely assume the reference to be to the

remaining six rooms comprising the cycle of frescoed apartments.

It must, therefore, have been between 1524 and 1527 that the original idea of a series of flat-ceilinged rooms, approached from the tower stair, was changed to one of rooms with raised and vaulted ceilings, accessible from the west wing staircase. Patzak implied the various restorations and repairs of the villa were completed all at the same time.¹⁶ More probable, however, is that the restorations correspond to the two separate interior decorating campaigns. As discussed above, work done on the tower and its stair was concurrent with the earlier project. For the final plan, the principal access was changed to the west wing to ensure the proper approach to the fresco cycle. It was at that time that Genga built the grand west stairway,¹⁷ and enclosed the south cortile arcades to provide support for the raised ceiling of a piano nobile room. In addition, he closed the loggia above the cortile arcade to gain the maximum room space.

It is possible that the concept for the final decorative programme was coincidental with the decision to build a new villa behind the Sforza structure.¹⁸ The theory of the inter-related fresco cycle and new architecture is a tempting one, particularly in so far as it explains the decision to change the original sequence of decorated apartments in the Sforza villa. Initially, they had begun north of the tower, and were probably intended to include as many of the piano nobile apartments as were thought necessary for reception and living rooms. Now, they commence in the south wing, approached from a stair in the west, and lead the guest to the bridge connect-

ing the old villa with the new della Rovere Imperiale (Fig. 17).¹⁹ Furthermore, as will become apparent in an examination of the fresco cycle itself, the iconography and themes of the decorative functions function successfully as a prelude, or mental preparation, to the experience of the new architecture, thereby suggesting a synthetic concept.²⁰

Supporting the argument of interacting programmes is a letter of 13 August 1522, written by Castiglione in reply to Francesco Maria's request for Raphael's letter on the Villa Madama.²¹ It seems, then, that Francesco Maria was already in 1522 interested in a terraced garden-villa complex in the Roman imperial style, for which the terrain behind the Sforza villa was ideally suited. It is not known when he received the letter, but that he did, is indicated by the fact that a copy of Raphael's letter on the Villa Madama has been found in the Florence Archivio di Stato²²--the provenance of the document can be explained by the circumstance of Vittoria della Rovere, last of the family, marrying Grand Duke Ferdinand of Tuscany in the seventeenth century, and bringing with her, into Medici possession, the inheritance of the della Rovere.

As was the case with the other projects in the Imperiale, the dating of the fresco cycle is essentially a speculative matter. In this instance, complications arise because one actually has two stages of the campaign to consider--conception and realization. The theory of an interrelated thematic-iconographic and architectural programme requires the idea of the decoration to already have been conceived, at least in its essential form, when the rooms were being finished and the present lay-out determined. As was discussed above, this stage of the

project falls between the years 1524 and 1527. When were the frescoes begun? Considered out of context, the reference in Genga's letter of 27 January 1528 is ambiguous, since one is not told whether he was to finish all the rooms in terms of walls and ceilings prepared to receive the decorations, or whether he was to hurry with the frescoes themselves. The ambiguity can be resolved by a letter from Leonora to her agent in Venice, dated 10 May 1530:

Havendo noi data principio à far depingere qui al Imperiale alcune nostre Camere e desiderando ch'ella siano compite per il medesimo maestro, ch'è Mr.o Francesco da Forli 23

Therefore, if Genga had been required to finish all the frescoes by 1528, he had failed drastically. More likely is that he was to complete only the room architecture. The implication in Leonora's letter is that the frescoes were already underway, since Francesco da Forli was being recalled to do more work in the Imperiale.²⁴ This places the beginning of the fresco painting between 1528 and 1530.²⁵

The della Rovere papers include the names of only two artists who were engaged on the decoration of the Villa Imperiale--that of Genga, who, however, as court architect, was principally (but not exclusively) a supervisor of the project; and that of Francesco da Forli (or Menzocchi). Vasari, in his life of Girolamo Genga, refers to five more artists:

... il qual palazzo [Imperiale] per ordine e disegno del Genga fu ornato di pittura d'istorie e fatti del duca da Francesco da Forli, da Raffael dal Borgo, pittori di buona fama, e da Camillo Mantovano, in far paesi e verdure rarissimo; e fra li altri vi lavorò anco Bronzino fiorentino giovinetto, come si è detto nella Vita del Puntormo. Essendovi anco condotti i Dossi Ferraresi, fu allogata loro una stanza a dipignere 26

The contribution of these artists can only be ascertained by a stylistic analysis. These analyses, however, have been a source of controversy before, as well as after Patzak's monumental attempt in the monograph of 1908. At present, Craig Hugh Smyth is engaged on a study of the authorship of the fresco cycle.

The attempts to identify each artist's work have been seriously handicapped by the fact that the villa underwent restoration in the nineteenth century, at which time a local artist, Giuseppe Gennari, repainted large portions of the frescoes. Although the villa again underwent extensive, and this time scientific, restoration in the 1960's, it was impossible, in some cases, to recover the original layer of paint. This is an unfortunate situation for the connoisseur. For one who is interested essentially in themes and iconography, it is some slight consolation to know that Gennari, in many instances, based his overpainting on the sixteenth century original.

The literary programme of the fresco cycle is an involved one, but, once again, we are not told who devised it. Patzak suggests Leonora, although he questions whether she could have managed it without an advisor, such as Paolo Giovio.²⁷ In view of her family background, Leonora can be considered an acceptable candidate for the task. Through her mother, Isabella d'Este, she had contact with the court of Ferrara. Leonora herself was a Gonzaga, and could therefore claim to have knowledge--in one case intimate--of two of the most important fresco cycles of the time--the Camera degli Sposi in Mantua, and the Palazzo Schifanoia in Ferrara. Her aunt--Isabella's sister-in-

law, and her own future mother-in-law--was Elisabetta, Duchess of Urbino. The courts of both Urbino and Ferrara were very important in terms of the development of Renaissance theatre, the influence of which can certainly be detected in the Villa Imperiale.²⁸ Isabella's letters, library, and art collection indicate that she was an acute and informed lady, familiar with classical and religious texts, as well as medieval romances²⁹--such were the surroundings in which Leonora was raised.³⁰

In conjunction with this, it is important to note that the few letters pertaining to the commission of the frescoes are part of Leonora's correspondence.³¹ Letters to and from Francesco Maria begin again with communications about the new villa under construction.

Referring once more to the idea of correlating projects, one can point out that Leonora's interest in, and influence on, the della Rovere villa were equal to those of Francesco Maria.³² As is revealed by the inscriptions she requested from Cardinal Bembo for the facades of the new Imperiale,³³ she intended the villa as a gift for her husband:

FR. MARIAE DVCI METAVRENSIVM A BELLIS REDEVNTI LEONORA
UXOR ANIMI EIVS CAVSA VILLAM EXAEDIFICAVIT PRO SOLE PRO
PULVERE PRO VIGILIIS PRO LABORIBUS VT MILITARE NEGOTIVM
REQVIETE INTERPOSITA CLARIOREM LAVDEM FRVCTVSQVE VBERIORES
PARIAT.

More than a gift, however, it was a tribute to the political and military figure of Francesco Maria--he, who could be a great and virtuous warrior in spite of the injustice suffered at the hands of others, was to consider this his reward, and enjoy it as a retreat from mundane affairs.

The inscriptions are equally relevant to the fresco cycle. Indeed, although the villa was to be a tribute to Francesco Maria, the frescoes in conjunction with the new architecture transformed the Villa Imperiale into a memorial.

The cycle involves eight rooms of different sizes, six of which are vaulted, and two of which have a flat ceiling (Fig. 17). The door from the ground floor to the piano nobile is located near the southwest corner of the cortile. Genga's grand stairway leads the guest to the first room of the cycle, the Sala del Giuramento, located in the south tract of the villa. Next is the Sala dei Cariatidi, followed by the Camera dei Semibusti, forming the southeast corner. The smallest room of the cycle, the Gabinetto, originally gave access to a stair leading from the ground floor up through the tower. Two more small rooms are in the east wing--the Camera degli Amorini and the Camera delle forze di Ercole. This brings one to the Sala Grande, at the angle of the east and north wings, and finally to the Sala della Calunnia.

The series of frescoed apartments can be considered on two levels. They are, first of all, a chain, a continue sequence of themes, which is extended (and concluded?) in the experience of the della Rovere villa. On the other hand, they are also a cycle, in so far as a juxtaposition, of theme and composition, is stressed between the first room and the last. The latter is perhaps the more personal and intimate level, to suggest the perpetuity of Francesco Maria's military prowess in his son, his son's son, and so forth. ³⁴

The leitmotif in the thematic-iconographic programme is the glorification of Francesco Maria. ³⁵ The ramifications of

this exaltation are implied in the inscriptions on the della Rovere facades. As a reminder, and for the sake of easy reference, they are here repeated in Georgina Masson's English translation:

For Francesco Maria, Duke of the Metaurian States on his return from the wars, his consort Leonora has erected this villa in token of affection, and in compensation for sun and dust, for watching and toil, so that during an interval of repose his military genius may prepare him for still wider renown and richer rewards. 36

In the frescoes, one obvious aspect of the theme of glorification are the allusions to the nobility and splendour of Francesco Maria and Leonora. This occurs in such direct form as the profusion of imprese, and as personal initials and names cleverly interwoven as part of the total fabric. The references are also expressed more subtly--for instance, by associating the patrons with the classical and mythological past, and by making frequent use of such symbolic plants as oak, laurel and palm. Finally, allusion to their glorious character is achieved by allegory itself.

While this state of exaltation is shared by Francesco Maria and Leonora, a more personal glory is the theme of the history frescoes, representing important events in the Duke of Urbino's political-military career. They are intended to impress on the guest the grandeur and worthiness of the patron. The scenes commence in the first room with the Spanish and German mercenaries giving the oath of allegiance to Francesco Maria on 17 January 1517, to aid him in regaining the Duchy of Urbino. They culminate in the final room with a revelation of the injustice done to the Duke, principally by the Medici--the

Calunnia fresco; and with a grand statement of Francesco Maria's ability to withstand and overcome such intrigues, indeed to succeed gloriously in spite of them--the Apoteosi of Francesco Maria.

According to Leonora's inscriptions, the recompense for an arduous military career was the enjoyment of the pleasures provided by a villa, a house in the countryside. The landscapes which predominate in the room decorations support and extend this theme. Leonora's role as the one to present, and dedicate, this magnificent gift in honour of her husband, is implied by the third theme in the frescoes--love conquers war. Although war may wage outside, within the confines of the retreat (and by extension, the Duchy of Urbino?) flourish peace and prosperity.³⁷ One notices, for example, that although great battle scenes were a popular subject in similar glorifying cycles (Palazzo Vecchio, Florence, and the Vatican Stanze), and although one presumes there were any number of such bloody scenes in Francesco Maria's career, those chosen for the Imperiale are all of triumphant, but peaceful, events. In this way, they are probably closer to the programme of the Gran Salone in the Medici villa at Poggio a Caiano, where the principal theme, as indicated by a quotation from the Georgics--Stvdiv qvibvs arva tveri--is that agriculture (peaceful cultivation of the land) flourishes where there is no war.

The grotesques, abundant in four rooms, from the Camera dei Semibusti to the Camera delle forze di Ercole, are imbued with motifs pertaining to a lush and plentiful harvest. Another motif, evident in both the grotteschi and the illusionist wall decoration, is that of trophies of armour and weapons,

being burnt, or simply set up. One finds them in the Apoteosi scene, in the spandrels of the Camera dei Semibusti, beside caryatids, and in the vault, of the Gabinetto, as well as alongside rivergods in the Sala Grande. Strict abstinence from any and all warfare is stressed.

After the revelation, in the Sala della Calunnia, of Francesco Maria as a magnanimous warrior and exalted personage, the next step, physically for the guest, leads to the first sunken courtyard of the della Rovere villa. The themes and allusions, developed in the eight frescoed apartments, are now part of a reality; and one in which not only Francesco Maria, but the guest himself, can participate, because he has learnt and understood the dedication, the raison d'être, of the new villa. ³⁸

The attempt to find a precedent for this unusual idea of a decorative programme depending for its success and completion on an implied continuation beyond the physical context of the rooms, presents difficulties. As it is, I know of only two similar examples--the first of which could well be a precedent--stressing the concept of internal-external correlation. One is Raphael's Sala di Psiche in the Farnesina, where two of the pendentive scenes on the garden side of the loggia depend, iconographically, on an external projection. ³⁹ The second example, from the mid-sixteenth century, is the Villa d'Este at Tivoli, where the interior decorative programme, and the gardens, are governed by the same iconographical plan. ⁴⁰

As was the case with the themes in the eight rooms, the compositions of the frescoes can also be reduced to a series of common principles. Illusionism and its possibilities are

a consistent preoccupation which allows for the maximum of liberty in articulating both wall mass and wall decoration. For instance, lunettes sometimes become shell niches, displaying antique busts or swags; sometimes they are interpreted as settings for mythological subjects. In other rooms, chiaroscuro statues, in brick and stucco niches, or caryatids, form part of the illusionistic vocabulary. In all cases, even if the eye is not deceived, it is enticed and delighted.

The painted architecture defines or extends the wall, or functions as a frame, a fixed point, for an illusionistic landscape. Where painted architecture is abandoned, pergolas and arbors take its place. In one case, illusionistic tapestries are used to create an interesting tension by giving subtle indication of, and at the same time taking great care to hide, the painted space beyond. In this context, the idea of painted tapestries derives from Raphael's Sala di Psiche.⁴¹ Although in the Roman villa they appear only as velaria spanned across the vault, in the Imperiale they are used on both wall and ceiling.

The concept of illusionistic mural painting is entirely in keeping with developments begun in the fifteenth century in Rome and north Italy--for example, Nicholas V's Biblioteca Greca and Mantegna's Camera degli Sposi⁴²--and continued particularly rapidly in late fifteenth, and early sixteenth, century Rome, with examples such as Pinturicchio's frescoes in the Belvedere, Michelangelo's Sistine Ceiling, Raphael's Vatican Stanze, and the frescoes in the Farnesina by Peruzzi, Raphael and Sodoma.⁴³ In the Sforza villa, illusionism was certainly employed because of its current vogue, but also because it was

the only solution for what were really quite small, fifteenth century rooms, and had to be grand, sixteenth century reception rooms.

It is significant that the two aspects of the decoration, which for lack of better terms I shall call the real and the fanciful, are strictly confined to their respective areas--that is, the ceiling (excluding the last room) and the wall. Admittedly, the ceiling paintings, in three out of six cases, are displayed as illusionist tapestries. Their essence, however, lies in the historical event depicted.⁴⁴ Not until the final room--but not, I think, for lack of ceiling space--do the real and the fanciful merge. The historical scene--the Apoteosi--has moved from its pre-ordained position on the ceiling, to the wall, and, as an episode involving the protagonist projected into the realms of myth, becomes a union of the real and the fanciful. This union is fully justified since, in the context of the frescoes, it is the logical outcome of Francesco Maria's progressive glorification.

The first room of the cycle--the Sala del Giuramento (Figs. 18-21)⁴⁵--performs a dual role. It serves to put the guest in the proper frame of mind to be able to appreciate and accept Francesco Maria's ultimate apotheosis, and it prepares him, in terms of themes and compositions, for what he will see in the subsequent apartments. Indeed, the room might be described as a stage set for the unfolding of Francesco Maria's story. In this case, the vocabulary of the theatre is no mere figure of speech--under the vault, a row of putti are lifting some voluminous drapery, which can conceivably be interpreted as the curtain rising (Figs. 18 and 19).⁴⁶ This conceit is extended

to the vault--more putti are engaged in lifting up drapery to reveal an expanse of painted sky between the balustrade at the top of the vault, and the ceiling fresco.(Fig. 20). Note how conscious is the effort to keep wall and ceiling scenes separate--each has its own unveiling ceremony.

The success of the Sala del Giuramento as the initial and introductory experience of the fresco cycle is guaranteed by its awesome proportions, both real and illusionistic, and by its classical solemnity.⁴⁷ Although it is the largest room in terms of length and width, the ceiling is proportionately too low. In order to achieve the desired harmony, Genga raised the ceiling, at the same enclosing the cortile arcades immediately below, to strengthen the base of the room. He also tried to gain extra height by resorting to illusionist ionic columns in the pendentives of the room. Although it is understood for what it attempted, the illusionism is far from convincing.⁴⁸

The noble dimensions of the room are continued in the painted wall architecture. The feeling of wall mass is certainly aided by the fact that the rising curtain obscures the top third of the plein air view. The spandrels, pendentives and lunettes contribute to this sense of solidity. The lunettes are decorated with purple shells, into which are set swags displaying the letters of the Duke's name and title. Shells, however, are in essence delicate objects. In order for the lunettes to be consistent with the sensation of heavy architecture, the shells are cleverly designed to be smaller than the niche area, thereby revealing a considerable amount of illusionist masonry.⁴⁹

The ceiling fresco in this room is the largest of all five examples.(Fig. 21). Its impression of grandeur and solidity does not, however, depend only on its generous dimensions. Whereas three of the five ceiling frescoes are treated playfully as awnings or tapestries, the Giuramento fresco floats miraculously,⁵⁰ and with the greatest precision and regularity.⁵¹ Considered in the context of the other ceiling frescoes, such characteristics appear incongruous. They can, however, be satisfactorily explained by a juxtaposition of this room with the last one, the Sala della Calunnia (Fig. 37). The oath of allegiance, depicted in the first room, led ultimately to the apotheosis, seen in the last. These two apartments, therefore, are particularly close in theme, being the commencement and culmination (or climax) of Francesco Maria's road to glory. Considered in abbreviated form, they are consequential. The fact that the composition of the two ceilings compliment each other reinforces this relationship. In the first room, in contrast to the others (excluding the Gabinetto and Camera degli Amorini), the ceiling fresco is truly a quadro riportato. This ceiling, therefore, has as much of a strictly flat aspect, as does the panelled one of the final room. To carry their similarity even further, a border of scrollwork decorates the Giuramento fresco, as though it were the outer row of panels on such a ceiling as the last one. Due to the narrow ties between the Sala del Giuramento and the Sala della Calunnia, one is encouraged to think of the frescoes as a cycle--the last moves into the first, and can begin again.⁵²

In the Sala delle Cariatidi (Figs. 22-6),⁵³ the weight of solemn architecture has dissolved into plein air. A con-

tinuous landscape extends up to the level of the door lintels. The guest must determine his position in, and his relationship to, this agoraphobic view by the placement of the caryatids. Since they are set some distance into the landscape, but at the same time function as part of the room framework, the sensation of space expands, as the guest imagines the painted foreground merging with the real floor at his feet (Fig. 22).

The caryatids support an insubstantial architecture of pergolas, composed, properly, of oak, laurel and palm leaves. Only the four corners of the room suggest substance and strength, being defined by tree trunks from which grow luxurious, leafy boughs. Above the landscape, and between the pergolas, is an expanse of sky covered only by the ceiling painting in the centre of the vault (Fig. 26). This, representing Francesco Maria in triumphal procession, is treated as though it were a rustic and sturdy tapestry, which indeed it would have to be in such a setting of complete boschereccia. It is affixed to a frame of branches, which derives, in miraculous regularity, from the corner tree trunks. Aputto reinforces each corner, squatting on top of the tree trunk and supporting the tapestry in imitation of Atlas. Although the pergolas are composed of laurel, oak and palm, the branches twisting around the ceiling tapestry are sprouting oak branches--a neat and precise allusion to Francesco Maria della Rovere.

The Camera dei Semibusti (Figs. 27-30) ⁵⁴ resumes the illusionist architecture of the first room, which in the transition has lost much of its regularity and classical solemnity--the backs of the window seats change from perfectly straight to

concave; the pilasters have no capitals, as a proper classical order should, but simply corbels with scrolls to either side. In place of the curtain rising on the landscape, as in the first room, the guest now sees swags with clusters of fruit at the centre. Again, the change of gravity to lightness can be illustrated by the example of the shells in the lunettes--where before they were small and dull-coloured, they are now white and fragile, filling out the entire lunette to dispel any sensation of thick wall.

This room is the first one to use grotteschi. In this case, they are confined to the spandrels (Fig. 28), but will be elaborated in the following three rooms. A distinct pattern can be discerned in the distribution of the spandrel grotesques--those over niches displaying male busts have as a central motif a pair of birds pulling heads of wheat from cornucopiae. The ladies similarly have two birds; most interesting, however, is the extra motif of a trophy of crossed spear and axe--a reference, perhaps, to Leonora, who has shown herself capable of recalling Francesco Maria from the wars to indulge in villegiatura.

The pendentives are the settings for mythological gods and Personifications (Figs. 28-9). The association between the patrons and the classical past is here heavily underscored.

A sumptuously thick garland of twelve kinds of leaves circumscribes the top vault area which, reinforced by a balustrade seen al di sotto in sù, opens to the sky (Fig. 30). An octagonal ceiling painting, the Coronation of Charles V

at Bologna in 1530, is depicted as a tapestry, attached to the balustrade by delicate, fluttering ribands.

The smallest room of the series, the Gabinetto (Figs. 31-2),⁵⁵ possesses the singular volta a schifo. Room area is redefined by illusionist architecture. Originally, there were landscapes painted in the great panels of the wall, which would have managed to abolish the present claustrophobic effect. Caryatids, similar to those in the Vatican Stanza d'Eliodoro, stand to either side of the corners. Between them and the no longer extant landscapes are narrow, illusionist niches, displaying grand trophies of weapons and armour. The room also has an alcove, which is projected into an illusionist balcony, overlooking a vast landscape.

The lower vault is reserved entirely for grotteschi, and is the most elaborate example of these in the cycle (Fig. 32). The central part of the four sides of the vault displays oval medallions, representing Pace setting fire to a suit of armour. The lower vault area approaches most closely the concept of a Roman imperial ceiling, subdivided according to the principles of antique compartment schemes.

Because of the vault construction, the ceiling painting in the Gabinetto fills the entire upper area, with no indication of open sky beyond. This, nevertheless, is perfectly rational, since the Gabinetto (as is the next room) is situated in the tower tract of the east wing. The ceiling painting represents a church ceremony, possibly that performed in 1509 by Cardinal Alidosi, in which Francesco Maria was named Captain General of the Church.⁵⁶

In the following two rooms,--the Sala degli Amorini (Fig. 33)⁵⁷

and the Camera delle forze di Ercole (Fig. 34) ⁵⁸--botanical forms and illusionist architecture are given equal representation. In the former, the wall is still essentially a solid wall, and only the members of its framework are articulated with thick mouldings and garlands of leaves. The centre of the wall is penetrated by a round-arched doorway, an opening continued externally by a pergola leading into a landscape. Chiaroscuro statues in red brick niches adorn the wall space to either side of the openings. The groteschi in this room have descended from the vault to the wall, where herms stem from capitals (most appropriately baskets of fruit) of leaf-columns surrounding the doors. The herms support a fragile drapery, which, as a form only, recalls the swags of leaf and fruit in the Camera dei Semibusti (Fig. 27). Careful examination reveals that most of the forms are quite consistent from room to room, and only manage to deceive the eye by metamorphosing from one essence to another.

Above the ground level niches hang portraits (della Rovere?) medallions, encircled by a garland of laurel leaves--the glory of the past as a superlative statement.

The spandrels, lunettes and pendentives are filled with groteschi motifs of generous harvest. The herms of the wall are repeated in the pendentives, but now supporting baskets of fruit or little medallions. Lunettes become the setting for putti, each shown with a weapon, or attribute of war. However, like Chrétien de Troie's knight, Yvain, whose role in late-medieval society had become meaningless, these devices of warfare lose all menacing significance in the context of villeggiatura, and become the playthings of putti.

The upper vault is divided into one great oval medallion, clearly a variation on the theme of the Gabinetto vault--an illusionist compartment ceiling. Again, any suggestion of open sky is avoided, since this room, like the Gabinetto, is contained in the tower section.

The Camera delle forze di Ercole (Fig. 34) has, similar to the previous room, a great round-arched opening in the wall, although it is now a window, rather than a door. It leads, in the same way, through a pergola to a land and seascape beyond. In this room, the solid masonry between the openings has been replaced by illusionist tapestries.⁵⁹ The subjects for the tapestries are drawn from mythology; several apparently involve Venus and Psyche, but most have not been definitely identified. Patzak has described them thoroughly,⁶⁰ but pending a critical examination on my part, I cannot contribute interpretations.

Again, the lunettes are settings for mythological scenes, which in this case are the deeds of Hercules. Like Venus, goddess of love, Hercules is an appropriate figure for Francesco Maria's and Leonora's frescoes--Hercules, condemned to the twelve deeds by the hatred of Hera, fulfilled them and eventually regained all his rightful possessions.⁶¹ Hercules, in conjunction with the motto, fortes creantur fortibus, was furthermore Francesco Maria's impresa.⁶²

The spandrels and pendentives are filled with groteschi, using the forms with which the guest had already familiarized himself in the Sala dei Semibusti (Fig. 27)--birds, wheat, more plants, humanoid forms. One of each pair of spandrels provides

an elaborate pattern of plants and animals to frame the letters: FM DVX. V.

Both this room, and the previous one, have consciously constructed an illusionist barrier between the guest and the space beyond. In the Camera degli Amorini (Fig. 33), it is a garland running the perimeter of the room, requiring the guest to step over it before he could, visually, progress up the steps and through the pergola into open space. In the Camera delle forze di Ercole (Fig. 34), the room is designed with a high, illusionist socle, seemingly insurmountable. It is decorated with a scrollwork frieze, and with massive corbels dividing recessed panels, which hold chiaroscuro designs of men on horseback.

The composition of the ceiling in the Hercules room relates to that of the Camera dei Semibusti (Fig. 27), displaying the same thick garland of leaves and bunches of fruit around the vault aperture. The ceiling fresco, once again an awning secured with ribands, represents the investiture of Francesco Maria as General to the Republic of Venice, a ceremony performed 1523 by Doge Gritti.

In the Sala Grande (Figs. 35-6),⁶³ the illusionist architecture abandons its early license, and becomes again classically austere. Fluted corinthian pilasters subdivide the wall spaces, which, in the lower areas, are balconies, leading the eye to landscapes beyond. Above, the wall spaces become recessed panels for eight river gods and reclining youths. These lean on their amphorae or bolsters, with trophies and cornucopiae beside them. At ground level, two chiaroscuro statues stand in illusionist niches opposite one another.

Since this room has a level, panelled ceiling, decorated with the patrons' initials and imprese, the desire to open to the sky had to be realized elsewhere. In fact, above the balconies are oval apertures, complete with a garland circumscribing it, and a balustrade al di sotto in sù (Fig. 36).

The guest has finally come to the Sala della Calunnia (Figs. 37-40).⁶⁴ Through the last seven rooms he was constantly reminded of the patron's noble and magnanimous character--the scenes of Carità, Calunnia and Apoteosi are now comprehensible.

Like the first room, the Sala della Calunnia stresses the idea of solemnity and austerity. The playful motifs of the previous rooms are momentarily forgotten as the guest is induced to recall the initial statement of the fresco cycle--the Giuramento--which aided Francesco Maria to not only regain his rightful place as Duke of Urbino, but to aspire to even greater glories, climaxed in the Apoteosi. The other two scenes in the room are, as it were, footnotes to the Apoteosi. The Carità can be specifically interpreted as a reference to the Christian charity, or hospitality, extended by the della Rovere to the Medici, when they were expelled from Florence at the beginning of the sixteenth century. This scene enforces the statement of the Calunnia fresco, where the injustice suffered by Francesco Maria, due to Medici dynastic policies, is allegorically suggested.⁶⁵

Carità (Fig. 37), a generously proportioned lady with four children around her, is seated on a raised platform in the centre of an oval alcove, the setting also used for the other two scenes. The guest is separated from these by an

illusionist step, and two grand columns supporting the room architrave. The only escape appears to be by way of side doors, painted into the corners of the room, and leading to a landscape (Fig. 38). They are, perhaps, an indication of the doors by which the guest will shortly enter the first sunken courtyard of the new villa. To either side of Carità stand Spes and Fides.

The Calunnia scene (Fig. 40) is composed of eight central figures, with Penitenza on the right, and Verità on the left. As Patzak pointed out, the scene depends on both Lucian's and Alberti's description of Apelles' painting. In De Pictura. Liber III, Alberti provides the following summary:

Lodasi leggendo quella discrezione della Calunnia, quale Luciano racconta dipinta da Appelle. Parmi ~~co~~ cosa non aliena dal nostro proposito qui narrarla, per ammonire i pittori in che cose circa alla invenzione loro convenga essere vigilantissimi. Era quella pittura uno uomo con sue orecchie molte grandissime, apresso del quale, una di qua e una di là, stavano due femmine: l'una si chiamava Ignoranza, l'altra si chiamava Sospensione. Più in là veniva la Calunnia. Questa era una femmina a vederla bellissima, ma pareva nel viso troppo astuta. Tenea nella sua destra mano una face incesa; con l'altra mano trainava, preso pe' capelli, uno garzonetto, il quale stendeva suo mani alte al cielo. Ed eravi uno uomo palido, brutto, tutto lordo, con aspetto iniquo, quale potresti assomigliare a chi ne' campi dell'armi con lunga fatica fusse magrito e riarso: costui era guida della Calunnia, e chiamavasi Livore. Ed erano due altre femmine compagne alla Calunnia, quali a lei aconciavano suoi ornamenti e panni: chiamasi l'una Insidie e l'altra Fraude. Diètro a queste era la Penitenza, femmina vestita di veste funerali, quale sé stessa tutta stracciava. Dietro seguiva una fanciulletta vergognosa e pudica, chiamata Verità. 66

The climax is reached in the Apoteosi. Francesco Maria kneels before a seated lady, whom Patzak identifies as Leonora.⁶⁷ She extends him an olive branch,⁶⁸ and at the same time a putto is crowning her with a garland of laurel leaves.⁶⁹ Abbondanza and Pace, the themes which dominated in the previous apartments, are here represented in personified form to either side of the principal scene.

The guest can now proceed through to the new della Rovere villa, over the connecting wing, and down a hidden staircase, to the first sunken courtyard.

Footnotes: Chapter II

1. See Patzak, p. 8.
2. Vasari-Milanesi, vol. VI, pp. 318-9.
3. In Georg Gronau, "Die Kunststrebungen der Herzöge von Urbino. III. Girolamo Genga und der Bau der Villa Imperiale," Jahrbuch der preussischen Kunstsammlungen, Beiheft, vol. 27, suppl. 3, 1906, doc. I.
4. Cf. S. J. Freedberg, Painting in Italy: 1500-1600, Harmondsworth, 1971, p. 174, where he states the work was begun in 1524, and that Genga died in 1531.
5. Cf. Antonio Pinelli and Orietta Rossi, Genga Architetto, Rome, 1971, p. 126.
6. Gronau, doc. II.
7. Ibid., docs. III-VIII.
8. See Pinelli, p. 124.
9. Gronau, doc. IX.
10. Laura Filippini-Baldani, "Francesco Menzocchi. Pittore Forlivese del '500 e la Villa Imperiale di Pesaro," Melozzo da Forlì, vol. XVI, April 1938, p. 136. But cf. *ibid.*, p. 143, where she talks of the Sala del Giuramento and the Camera degli Amorini as having been done during the first work phase of 1523-6.

11. Patzak, pp. 12-3; cf. Adolfo Venturi, Storia dell'arte italiana--La Pittura del Cinquecento, vol. 9. v., Milan, 1932, p. 666, and Carlo Arseni, Villa Imperiale a Pesaro e altre questioni riguardanti l'attività di Girolamo architetto, Urbino, 1969, p. 46.
12. See Patzak, pp. 66 and 70.
13. See *ibid.*, p. 76, and Marchini, La Villa Imperiale, p. 12. Neither, however, associate them with an earlier campaign.
14. Gronau, doc. X.
15. *Ibid.*, doc. XVIII.
16. Patzak, pp. 11-2.
17. See Amico Ricci, Storia dell'architettura in Italia, vol. III, Modena, 1859, p. 127.
18. Cf. Marchini, "Il Problema dell'Imperiale," p. 66.
19. Although it has been assumed (see Patzak, p. 40) that the connecting wing was not built until 1587, Pinelli, p. 192, argues that it actually was built in the 1530's when the new villa was being constructed. He supports his argument with two points--in the Sala del Giuramento is a view of the Villa Imperiale under construction, with the bridge clearly included; an early sixteenth century drawing of the Villa Imperiale, in the Stephen Spector Collection, also indicates the connecting wing.
20. See also Pinelli, p. 127.

21. See L. Pungileoni, Elogio storico di Raffaello da Urbino, Urbino, 1829, pp. 181-2, corresponding note. See also Georgina Masson, Italian Villas and Palaces, London, 1959, p. 129; and Craig Hugh Smyth, "The Sunken Courts of the Villa Giullia and the Villa Imperiale," Essays in Memory of Karl Lehmann, New York, 1964, p. 306, ns. 11 and 12.
22. See Philip Foster, "Raphael on the Villa Madama: the text of a lost letter," Römisches Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte, vol. 11, 1967/8, pp. 307-12.
23. Gronau, doc. XXVIII.
24. See also Venturi, vol. 9. v., p. 668.
25. See also Pinelli, p. 127.
26. Vasari-Milanesi, vol. VI, pp. 318-9; see *ibid.*, vol. V, pp. 99-100, for more detailed account.
27. Patzak, p. 15; see also Thode, p. 173, and Venturi, vol. 9. v., p. 666.
28. In both the frescoes and the della Rovere villa. See Amalia Mezzetti, Il Dosso e Battista Ferraresi, Ferrara, 1965, pp. 34-5; Felton Gibbons, Dosso and Battista Dossi, Princeton, 1968, pp. 20-1; Arseni, pp. 16-7 and 24; Pinelli, pp. 129-30, 137 and 153-5.
29. See Julia Cartwright, Isabella d'Este, vol. I, London, 1932, pp. 76-7.
30. See also Pinelli, p. 191.

31. Gronau, docs. XXVIII, XXX; see also Marchini, La Villa Imperiale, p. 29.
32. See Arseni, pp. 11-2; also Ricci, vol. III, p. 127.
33. Gronau, doc. XLII; see also *ibid.*, docs. XLIII-XLVI.
34. In the Apoteosi fresco, note the two young men kneeling behind Francesco Maria--his sons?
35. See also Mancini, p. 59, and Pinelli, pp. 127-9.
36. Masson, p. 129.
37. See Pinelli, pp. 127 and 138.
38. As will be discussed in Chapter III, the approach over the connecting wing is one of the only two entrances to the della Rovere villa. In fact, the guest was more or less forced to progress through the frescoed apartments before going into the new villa, since the other entrance is hardly obvious, being far from the main road--it is simply a door into the third terrace, or giardino segreto.
39. See John Shearman, "Die Loggia der Psyche in der Villa Farnesina und die Probleme der letzten Phase von Raffaels graphischem Stil," Jahrbuch der Kunsthistorischen Sammlungen in Wien, vol. LX, 1964, pp. 70-1.
40. See David Coffin, The Villa d'Este at Tivoli, Princeton, 1960, p. 91.
41. See Sven Sandström,¹ Levels of unreality, Uppsala, 1963, p. 126; also Shearman, "Die Loggia der Psyche," p. 70.

42. See Anthony Blunt, "Illusionistic Decoration in Central Italian Painting of the Renaissance," Journal of the Royal Society of Arts, vol. CVII, April 1959, pp. 312-3.
43. See also Freedberg, pp. 174-5, and Marchini, La Villa Imperiale, pp. 27-9.
44. See Gibbons, p. 81.
45. For extensive description, consult Patzak, pp. 264-85, and Mancini, pp. 41-3.
46. The possibility of a stage with a curtain, at this time, is indicated by Gibbons, p. 22, in reference to Ariosto's description in Orlando furioso, XXXII, 80; see also Marchini, La Villa Imperiale, p. 16; but cf. Seitz, p. 462, where he states the drapery is a modern addition (by Gennari?).
47. See Marchini, La Villa Imperiale, p. 16.
48. See also Filippini-Baldani, p. 142.
49. See *ibid.*
50. See Pinelli, p. 131, for his explanation.
51. See Marchini, La Villa Imperiale, p. 16, where he talks of this one as a tapestry inspired by the Farnesina Sala di Psiche; see also Freedberg, p. 175.
52. See p. 48, and also n. 34 above.

53. Most thorough descriptions are contained in Patzak, pp. 285-309, and Mancini, pp. 47-8.
54. See Patzak, pp. 309-30, and Mancini, pp. 49-50.
55. See Patzak, pp. 330-9, and Mancini, p. 52.
56. Cf. E. Monti, Descrizione artistica delle Pitture esis-
nella Villa Imperiale, Pesaro, 1881, p. 11; Filippini-
Baldani, p. 249; and Marchini, La Villa Imperiale, p. 23,
all of whom describe it as a ceremony in which Francesco
Maria was named Captain of the Republic of Florence.
57. See Patzak, pp. 339-48, and Mancini, pp. 52-4.
58. See Patzak, pp. 348-67, and Mancini, pp. 54-5.
59. See Sandström, pp. 125, and 126-7.
60. Patzak, pp. 358-64.
61. See also Vaccaj, Bergamo, p. 68.
62. Heinrich Wurm, Der Palazzo Massimo alle Colonne, Berlin,
1965, p. 263. Note also the Apoteosi fresco in the con-
text of my interpretation of the cycle as a cycle--
fortes creantur fortibus--the military glory is to be
continued in his descendants.
63. See Patzak, pp. 367-75, and Mancini, pp. 55-7.
64. See Patzak, pp. 375-99, and Mancini, pp. 57-9.

65. See Thode, pp. 175 and 177; also Pinelli, p. 134.
66. Leon Battista Alberti, "De Pictura. Libro Terzo,"
Opere Volgari, ed. by Cecil Grayson, Bari, 1973, pp. 95-7.
67. Patzak, p. 384.
68. See Filippini-Baldani, pp. 257-8, where she states that this had originally been a lily, symbol of purification (from guilt).
69. Patzak states the putto is crowning Francesco Maria. It is entirely, appropriate, though, that Leonora should also be acknowledged for her role in Francesco Maria's glorious career.

CHAPTER III: THE DELLA ROVERE VILLA IMPERIALE

The della Rovere Imperiale, built to the northwest of the Sforza villa, is oriented on a south-north axis (the Sforza villa on an east-west axis), with the casino at the south, and the gardens extending north (Figs. 2 and 41-4). On its east side it is joined to the older structure by a connecting wing,¹ and thereby shares with it a spacious piazza, which lies west of the Sforza villa, and south of the della Rovere villa. This connecting arm is balanced on the west side of the casino by a wing of equal length.

Immediately to the north of the Sforza villa, Monte S. Bartolo rises in two steep levels, which have been utilized by the architect to serve as terraces in the villa-garden complex. The piazza shared by the two structures is the lowest level of the della Rovere villa, and consequently the one on which the domestic quarters of the casino are situated.² In addition, the casino has two nobile levels, of which the first is almost one height with the roof line of the Sforza villa. Inside the complex, this piano nobile extends into a courtyard, or the first of the three terraces.³ To the north of the casino, across and on the same level as the courtyard, is a grotto. This functions simultaneously as the base for the second terrace, a giardino pensile, which itself is level with the second piano nobile of the casino. Finally, the northernmost terrace is a giardino secreto, built at the same height as the walkways which surmount the casino and the containing walls of the complex.

The Urbino papers are once again vague in the matter of an initial construction date for the della Rovere Imperiale. In

Chapter II, it was pointed out that Francesco Maria could already have been thinking of a new structure in 1522. The theory was further developed to be one of correlating projects, which placed the beginning of the conception of the della Rovere villa, along with that of the present Sforza apartment lay-out, between the years 1524 and 1527.

Two letters, from 27 January and 12 March 1528, already mention nove fabbriche and nove cose, but do not specify the Imperiale. However, the first letter is a particularly attractive one in that it mentions le nove fabbriche in juxtaposition to le vecchie, and in that sense encourages the view that the two projects were conceived as interrelated:

Ill.ma et Ex.ma Sig.ra et Patrona mia Obs.ma.
Esendo tornato da la Ex.tia del Sig.or Duca a la quale portai la necessitata litiera, già de mille anni pensava senza dubbio venire ha V. Ex.tia. Non di manco al prefato Ill.mo è parso fare quella provisione per la quale voleva venire a V. Ex.tia più mesi sono: La quale provisione per tempo avanti desiderai de avere a spendere quatrocento o cinque ciento scudi de le sue entrate in fabbriche et altri ocurenti bisogni e servitij soi ogni anno. Perchè non solo che non si possa finire le nove fabbriche, ma non si pò riparare a le vecchie che non rovinano ogni giorno, ne le quale non v'è stantie che non vi piova Da Urbino a li XXVIJ de Gienaro 1528.

Bon servo Gieronimo Gingha. 4

Patzak does not refer to the above letter, ⁵ but uses one from 12 March 1528 in support of an early construction period. It is written by Raphael Hermenzono to Leonora:

Hieronimo da Genga mi ha mandato la qui alligata lettera, et si è doluto con mi di haver havuto tardi la lettera de V. Ex. sopra la picolezza del Camarino Et perchè desegna far nove cose e vole molti dinari e delle intrate del Signore, non se può satisfare a questa fabrica 6

The first specific mention of the della Rovere Imperiale occurs in August 1532. In a letter written 17 August to Leonora, Genga mentions that "L'altro giorno scrissi a V. Ex.tia... a longho sopra la fabrica delo imperiale" ⁷

This document, Patzak writes, ⁸ erases the obscurity of a letter from 4 June 1532, in which Francesco Maria regrets that he has not received Genga's letter describing many architectural details--in conjunction with that of 17 August, the references are clearly to the Imperiale:

Il praefato Gio: antonio ci ha portato una lettera del Genga, il qual ne scrive che con essa ci manda molti disegni de fenestre, colonne et altre cose per le nostre fabriche, di somma importanza et a noi sommente a cuor ⁹

Another letter, written by Leonora to Leonardi on 8 August 1532, mentions "alcuni Telari de invetriati della casa del Imperiale" which have been ruined by a storm and must be repaired. ¹⁰

The above letters reveal that, by 1532, the della Rovere Imperiale was advanced to the stage of requiring colonne and other architectural decoration, as well as Telari de invetriati. It is known that work proceeded very slowly on the Villa Imperiale, due not only to the difficult terrain, but also to the frequent lack of funds to pay work crews and materials. ¹¹ From this point of view, it is reasonable to consider the nove fabriche, mentioned in 1528, as indeed referring to the Imperiale. My dating does not correspond with that of Patzak, who states that Genga may already have had the plans for the new villa in mind by 1528, ¹² but that he did not undertake any actual construction work until 1530. ¹³

Also in terms of its later chronology, the Villa Imperiale presents an interesting, complicated problem. It was never completed under Francesco Maria I's building programme. The last document from that period concerning it, is a letter of 24 July 1538--it refers to a payment of 400 scudi to Genga for the Imperiale.¹⁴ After Francesco Maria died in October 1538, until the end of the eighteenth century, at which time it was occupied by Spanish and Portuguese Jesuits, the villa was subjected to additions, unfortunate adaptations, and simple neglect.

Francesco Maria's son, Guidobaldo II, invested his money in wars against the Pope, and apparently was left with no funds to continue building the Villa Imperiale. In 1587, Guidobaldo's son, Francesco Maria II, recorded that "si è congiunta la casa vecchia con la nuova con le scale che vanno da alto a basso."¹⁵ Whether or not this refers to the connecting wing has been questioned. As was pointed out in Chapter II, Pinelli gives a convincing argument that the wing was built contemporaneously.

The Imperiale passed to the Medici in 1631, at which point a brief description of the villa was drawn up for Vittoria della Rovere. One reads that "nel 2.^o piano sono n.^o 15 stanze ornate parte con stucchi quali patono notabilmente dal humido"¹⁶

The Loraines acquired the property in 1737, but left it to decay. In 1763, Clement XIII gave it to the Jesuits, who remained there until the end of that century. The Albani were awarded the property in 1777 by Pius VI, and a major restoration programme was initiated by this family in the 1880's. It remains in the Albani family to date.

One presumes that the Villa Imperiale was to be completed as Genga and Francesco Maria I had intended it. Late nineteenth and early twentieth century drawings and photographs indicate that the principal areas of incompleteness were on the south facade. The central section had to be surfaced, and the west projecting wing completed in its upper storey.¹⁷

The two facades (east and west) of the connecting wing are entirely devoid of architectural decoration, the surface broken only by two windows, one above the other (Fig. 45). The great entrance arch, however, had received the same articulation as the south facade of the casino, at ground level. The architrave of the lower piers, and the socle pediment of the piano nobile windows and niches, are carried over to both sides of the connecting bridge. In view of this, is it not reasonable to assume that these facades were intended to continue the composition of the casino south facade, as well as that of the projecting west wing, which would be seen as one came through the arch?¹⁸ In fact, Francisco da Hollanda, in his drawing of the Imperiale, decorates the facade of the bridge in precisely this manner (Fig. 46).

The inspiration to build the della Rovere villa had undoubtedly come from Rome. There, similar villa-garden projects were eagerly supported by great sixteenth century patrons. References to, and parallels between the Villa Imperiale and the Belvedere, Farnesina and Villa Madama have frequently been made.¹⁹ One remembers, in particular, Francesco Maria's interest in the latter villa, testified by his request for a copy of Raphael's descriptive letter.²⁰

The prestigious name of these Roman villas is sometimes awesome enough to erase any question of influence from another source. It would be a most facile, and unfortunate, presumption, however, to say that the Imperiale depended exclusively from such Roman prototypes. Rather, the Roman inspiration must share the light with an architectural tradition that, about four decades earlier, had influenced Rome itself--in essence, it is the Urbinate-Sienese building style of Luciano da Laurana and of Francesco di Giorgio.²¹ As Frommel points out,²² this was responsible for the first Roman Renaissance villa, in the narrower sense of the word--the Belvedere of Innocent VIII.

In order to be comprehended, and critically appreciated, the architecture of the Villa Imperiale must first of all be seen as a confluence of the Romanized Urbino-Siena tradition, and of the direct Urbinate heritage of Girolamo Genga, the designing architect. The experiences of Genga in Rome, his awareness of, and association with, the circles of Bramante and Raphael, doubtlessly had a decisive influence on him. But it would be incorrect to regard it as formative to the point of excluding his own early artistic experiences and architectural heritage.²³ The debts to Rome, Bramante and Raphael are most evident in terms of Genga's storehouse of motifs and architectural vocabulary; the syntax is his own.

An analysis of the Villa Imperiale is complicated (or enriched) by the fact that this is Genga's first major architectural project. As court architect in the service of Francesco Maria, he had been initially engaged mainly on restorations,

repairs, and modernizations of his estates. Although his technical skills may have been given adequate scope here, surely his creative spirit would necessarily have been restrained. This creative genius, however, was a clearly defined one; and one which enabled him to handle the inherited vocabulary in a new and exciting manner.

Genga's early training had been as a painter in the studios of Signorelli and Perugino, where he acquired particular skill in the art of perspective painting. During his early years in Urbino, this talent was applied to designing furnishing for mascherati and triumphal marches--a very elaborate one began in 1509 with the wedding feast of Francesco Maria and Leonora, and culminated in Rome during the carnival of the following year.²⁴

However, at that time, Genga's primary occupation at the court of Urbino was the designing of stage sets, and of other pertinent paraphernalia of the theatre. It is possible, as Pinelli argues,²⁵ that Genga had been responsible for the scenography of Bibbiena's Calandria, the themes of which--love expels war, brings concordance--are clearly reiterated in the Sforza villa frescoes.

Genga's background, then, made him an admirably suitable choice for the designer of the Imperiale. Its function, after all, was to be a backdrop for the court of Urbino.²⁶ It contained no living quarters per se.²⁷ Indeed, the Sforza villa was the one to be inhabited on these occasions, while the new villa provided the many pleasures and entertainments. This is precisely stated in a letter written by Bernardo Tasso to

Vincenzo Laureo:

Il Palazzo è diviso in due parti, l'una fatta da que' Signori di casa Sforzesca che lo possedevano prima, ma aggrandita dalla gloriosa memoria del detto Principe; l'altra fabbricata da lui. Nella parte vecchia, come più sana, piena di molte stanze, vi sono fra gli altri duo appartamenti, uno de' quali, dov'è una gran camera tutta foderata di tavole, mi pare comodissimo per S. Sig. Illustrissima: la parte nova, ancor che non sia finita, è piena di stanze (benchè piccole) ben compartite 28

Was Francesco Maria's choice of Genga a deliberate and conscious one? The proximity of the dates of Genga's letter of introduction (4 August 1522), and of Castiglione's reply to the Duke's request for Raphael's Villa Madama letter (13 August 1522) certainly encourages this view. Since Genga had been in the service of Francesco Maria before the Duke's expulsion in 1516, he would have been perfectly aware of Genga's particular talents and potentials. As Vasari states:

In questo tempo, morto il duca Guido, e successo Francesco Maria duca terzo d'Urbino, fu da lui richiamato da Roma e constretto a ritornare a Urbino in quel tempo che'l predetto duca tolse per moglie e menò nel stato Leonora Gonzaga figliuola del marchese di Mantova, a da Sua Eccellenza fu adoperato in far archi trionfali, apparati e scene di commedie; che tutto fu da lui tanto ben ordinato e messo in opera, che Urbino si poteva assimigliare a una Roma trionfante: onde ne riportò fame e onore grandissimo. 29

The fact that there had been an earlier (1523) decorative campaign in the Sforza villa, which was subsequently abandoned, need not invalidate the theory that Francesco Maria had already intended from the start to have Genga create such a setting for his court. It simply means that not until after 1523 did the

patrons conceive of a synthetic programme. Why, if not for the implied reason, would Francesco Maria hire as architect an artist who previously had been essentially a painter? ³⁰

The key to the role, or purpose, of the Villa Imperiale is provided by the entrances and accesses, both into and throughout--these are necessarily limited and inapparent, but also calculated and compulsory. ³¹ The confusing situation becomes apparent as soon as one subjects the villa complex to a close scrutiny. ³²

In terms of both groundplan and elevation, the south facade of the della Rovere Imperiale is the principal one. It is the facade of the casino exposed to the countryside; indeed, it is the only part of the new villa that could, from a single vantage point (the vineyard and lands to the south), be seen by the external world--a forest surrounds the structure on the remaining three sides (Fig. 2).

The south facade is worthy of being seen--five massive bays articulate the middle tract at ground level. Each terminates in a semicircular niche, coffered as is the bay vault. Access from one bay to the next is by way of small archways cut into their sides (Fig. 41).

On the piano nobile, the division into five is continued by the vertical extension of the bay piers into doubled pilasters. The five fields thus created are given over to triangular pedimented windows at either end, and three niches in the central fields (Fig. 41). ³³

The motifs Genga employs in the facade reveal his indebtedness to both Rome and Bramante. The similarity between the

great coffered bays at ground level, and such as are found in the Basilica of Constantine or the Baths of Caracalla, is too obvious to be more than mentioned. It is from Bramante that Genga learned how to handle the wall surface--its potential plasticity is here fully explored. Not only the lower arcade contributes to a contrapuntal game of light and shade, but also the niches in the piano nobile. The solid wall itself participates in a more subtle way, in that Genga has pared away surface layers, defining the spaces between architectural members, such as piers, as either recessed or raised panels (Fig. 48).

One has, in fact, an extremely finely modelled facade, with no entrance, and only two windows for a great expanse of wall.³⁴ The visitor to the Villa Imperiale, it will be remembered, would take the road leading to the tower entrance of the Sforza villa (Fig. 47), walk across the cortile, and ascend by way of the west stair to the decorated apartments. Eventually, he would cross over to the new villa, by way of the connecting bridge, and find himself in the courtyard of the della Rovere Imperiale. During this procession, he would not once have caught a glimpse of the casino's south facade. It is not visible on the approach to the Sforza villa (Fig. 1). The rooms, also, do not provide a view, since they are located in the south, east, and partially in the north, wings. A view from a north window, however, would be blocked by the connecting wing (Fig. 17).

The access to the piazza before the casino is equally impressive³⁵--the connecting bridge between the two villas has, at ground level, an arch identical to the bays on the

casino facade. Through this archway one can see a similar bay on the east facade of the west projecting arm. The invitation to pass through, the promise of an attractive and exciting architecture once one enters the next space, is very tempting--but to what purpose, since the guest himself does not arrive there?

This question can, I think, be satisfactorily answered by attempting to discover the function of its setting, which, to my knowledge, has not been done before.

At this time, it was not only expedient, but also very popular, to have a large stable associated with the villa. Whereas in the Early Renaissance such structures were built as an integral part of the villa, in the sixteenth century they become a separate, but still important, part of the complex. In order to give a clearer impression of the scale and role of such stables, one can recount a number of examples contemporary with the Villa Imperiale.

Agostino Chigi was said to be a connoisseur of horses, and to keep a large and fine stable. When he commissioned the Farnesina, he also planned a scuderia, but had to wait until 1510 to purchase the adjacent piece of land on which to build it.³⁶ Although it was in complete ruin by 1808, the remaining foundations, and relevant architectural drawings, indicate it had been a structure no less magnificent than the Farnesina.³⁷

The stables of Cardinal Giulio de'Medici's Villa Madama are carefully and elaborately described in Raphael's letter:

Questo hypodramo ha da un lato tutto lo edifitio p(er)
lugezza et da latro stalle p(er) 400 cavallj eq(ue)ste

stallo fanno argine et speronj asostenere il piano etutta la lunghezza d(e) hypodramo e li cavallj volghano latesta a leva(n)te & Greco come latro edifitio et posselj dare laqua p(er) tutte le mangiatoie. 38

Federico Gonzaga, perhaps the most reputed breeder of horses of this period, requested Giulio Romano to build him a villa near his stables in Mantua:

... e montato che Giulio vi fu sopra se n'andarono fuori della porta di San Bastiano, lontano un tiro di balestra, dove sua Eccellenza aveva un luogo e certe stalle, chiamato il T, in mezzo a una prateria, dove teneva la razza de'suoi cavalli e cavalle: e quivi arrivati, disse il marchese che avrebbe voluto, senza guastare la muraglia vecchia, accomodare un poco di luogo da potervi andare 39

Since both Leonora's father (Francesco), and her brother (Federico), possessed such famed stables, it is not altogether unlikely that the fervour would carry over to Leonora herself, if it were not already well imbued in Francesco Maria. 40

In the Villa Imperiale, the stables are a part of the Sforza structure. This is consistent with the two ideals--an integral part of the early villa, yet separate from the later structure. Situated beneath the Sforza villa proper, the scuderia occupies two large rooms in the southern tract, to either side of a main central entrance (Fig. 41). Not included in the Sforza villa, however, is a cavallerizza, or open area for exercising and displaying the horses. The piazza to the south of the casino is ideally suited to this purpose. The horses are led out from the stable, around the east side of the villa, and finally up a ramp to the ground floor level. They are then ridden through the archway of the connecting wing, into the piazza. The exercising horses are confined to this area, no entrance into the villa is wanted in the south facade. The

guests could watch from the walkways on the roof of the casino--precisely the activity recorded in Francisco da Hollanda's drawing (Fig. 46).

An examination of the architecture of the south facade should provide further substantiation for this proposition. Of primary importance is to find a precedent for such a facade, preferably in terms of a scuderia. This, I believe, can be achieved by reference, once more, to the Farnesina. The ground-plan of the Farnesina, and the Imperiale casino, are based on a Roman villa type--an oblong central space flanked by two wings. Chigi's scuderia was built according to the same plan.⁴¹ Frommel's reconstruction provides it with a west (street) facade, composed of seven bays, or compartments, and defined by sets of double pilasters. The similar high attic over the piano nobile of the Farnesina scuderia and of the Imperiale south facade has already been noted by Wurm.⁴² The east (garden) facade of the Farnesina stables had two projecting wings, presumably reducing the number of compartments in the central east facade to five. Although the ground floor had no windows opening on to the street, in the east facade this level is identified by Frommel as a Lichthof--that is, open to the light, conceivably by means of an arcade.

We are unfortunately prevented from knowing exactly how close the formal juxtaposition of these two facades is, since one no longer exists, except in a part of its foundation. However, a possible confirmation is provided by Giulio Romano's cavallerizza of the Palazzo Ducale at Mantua. It was begun 1538-9, but completed by him in only one wing. There, in Giulio's

south wall, one finds a similar disposition of architectural elements--an arcaded ground floor, and a piano nobile with a high pilaster base. ⁴³ Another point of contact: is it strictly a coincidence that the wing of the Imperiale, overlooking the countryside, and the wing of the cavallerizza, opening onto the lake, both possess a triumphal arch motif window, which at that time was not a commonly used form (Fig. 48)? ⁴⁴

Although in terms of groundplan, the south piazza is logically the first part of the villa to discuss, in actual experience it is one of the last surprises for the visitor, since he can see it only when he has reached the top level of the villa, and looks down from the casino (Fig. 49). Instead, his first architectural experience is of the lowest terrace, or sunken courtyard. As described in the previous chapter, the guest enters this after passing from the Sforza villa apartments, through the connecting wing, into the della Rovere casino. His entrance is hardly grand--he merely slips unobtrusively from the opening in the east convex corner of the sunken courtyard (Fig. 50). But he has been forewarned--in the last Sforza apartment, the illusionist wall architecture provides a similar modest and unexpected exit in the corner (Fig. 38).

In the same way that the south facade lacks an anticipated entrance into the villa, the sunken courtyard neglects to provide an obvious access to the gardens which can be seen overhead. Such wall openings as are immediately comprehended by the visitor, initially still fail to satisfy his expectations. In the south wall is an arcaded loggia (Figs. 51-2) which has, at either end of an oblong interior, a door leading to four

variously shaped small apartments, disposed in identical arrangement to either side of the main oblong room (Figs. 17 and 43). Across the courtyard is a grotto (Figs. 53-4), having a central area with fountain and skylight, and two bathrooms to either side. The door through which the guest came from the Sforza villa is situated in the east corner of the courtyard, and, as a motif, is repeated in the other three corners. However, in both corners of the north (grotto) wall, the door is actually a sunken panel (Fig. 54); in the opposite corner of the south (loggia) wall, it is open, as is the first entrance discussed. But the guest has difficulty deciding, at first glance, whether these motifs are only an integral part of Genga's wall articulation, contributing to the play of light and shade, or whether they actually provide access to the space beyond.

In fact, the two short walls of the courtyard house the stairs leading to the giardino pensile above the grotto (Figs. 53 and 55). The stairs can be reached from the southern east and west doors, as well as from the aisles located immediately behind the facade of the grotto.

As was mentioned above, the della Rovere Imperiale was intended as the setting for the many entertainments of the Duke of Urbino's court. By narrowing down the broad term 'entertainment', to the more specific one of 'theatre', it becomes clear that whether or not the sunken courtyard was deliberately intended to be functional for such an activity, the design of it was certainly influenced by Genga's earlier career in scenography.⁴⁵

The generous proportions of the casino loggia are explained by Pinelli as the required space for theatrical productions

(Figs. 51-2). ⁴⁶ It also served as an airy and shaded room for meals, in which case the guests could look across the courtyard and see the grotto wall--this, as Patzak ⁴⁷ and Coolidge ⁴⁸ already noted, is designed in accordance with the Vitruvian principles of a Roman scaena frons. ⁴⁹ As would be the case in a real theatre, the passages and corridors are concealed. The short ends of the sunken courtyard are described by Pinelli as corresponding to the wings of a stage. ⁵⁰ The great central entrance of the grotto becomes the valva regia (Fig. 53), which could be reached by way of the narrow corridors behind the grotto wall. At present there are secondary entrances--valvae hospitalium (Fig. 54)--to the right and left of the main one, but Patzak questions whether or not they are part of Genga's design, since Buonamici omits them in his elevation of the courtyard. ⁵¹

Patzak has suggested that, in planning the lay-out of the gardens and terraces, Genga has kept in mind the construction of the ducal palaces at Urbino and Gubbio, both of which would have been familiar to him. ⁵²

The most obvious juxtaposition is with the Gubbio palace. There, as at Pesaro, the architectural unit involves four terraces, or levels. The principal living quarters are contained in the first, or nobile, level in both structures. Similarly, both have, at the lowest level--beneath the piano nobile--the domestic and storage quarters. The main longitudinal room of both buildings leads into a courtyard. Across this cortile, one has, at Gubbio, a wall with a fountain niche; at Pesaro, a grotto. Whereas in the Villa Imperiale the grotto wall sup-

ports a hanging garden, in the Gubbio Palazzo Ducale it supports the fourth side of the nobile level. Both at Pesaro and Gubbio the final terrace is a garden, although at Gubbio it also includes another tract of rooms.

The engineering principles applied in the complicated system of terracing at Urbino no doubt provided Genga with many further solutions to problems encountered due to the difficult terrain at Pesaro. However, I should like to suggest that Genga looked to the Urbino palace for more than just construction methods. The four convex corners of the Villa Imperiale sunken courtyard have usually been considered remarkable in their context. Such round 'towers' are not unique per se--one has seen them, as turrets, in Raphael's plans of the Villa Madama. Nevertheless, round 'towers' as semicircular convex corners are seen most distinctly in the giardino pensile of the Urbino ducal palace (Fig. 56).⁵³ Can this be considered Genga's prototype?

Climbing up the stairs, hidden in the east and west walls of the Imperiale sunken courtyard, the visitor arrives at the giardino pensile (Figs. 2, 42, 53 and 55). In size, it is the same as the grotto area it covers, and similarly the sunken courtyard below it. It had three fountains, which received their water supply from the reservoir situated behind the grotto.⁵⁴ In addition, this garden was decorated with numerous ornamental plants. As Mancini describes it: "Sopra le volte insiste un giardino a fiori con tre fontane contornato da verdissime spalliere di agrumi, e da studiati meandri ed ajuole."⁵⁵

The final terrace--a giardino segreto--surpasses in size any of the previous spaces considered singly (Figs. 2 and 42). The garden is encircled by high walls on three sides, which in the northern east and west corners extend into bastion-like semicircles. In the centre of the north wall is a gate, the second entrance into the Villa Imperiale. The garden itself is partitioned into four rectangular plots, with two paths on cross axis, functioning as the dividing line. This last terrace was also filled with a rich variety of plants, some imported from other geographical regions of Italy.⁵⁶

As discussed earlier, the means of ascending from one terrace to the next involve the element of surprise. On the other hand, the sight encountered on each level does not, since the suggestion of beautiful gardens was evident already in the sunken courtyard, with its two fountains and laurel trees.⁵⁷

In the context of the first two terraces, therefore, the giardino segreto acts as a logical culmination of the progression from the lowest to the highest levels. As such, it is a satisfying culmination of the aesthetic experiences, which commenced in the Sforza villa apartments, and continued in the della Rovere Imperiale. In other words, it is the experience of the visitor by way of the first entrance into the Villa Imperiale complex.

If, however, he were to encounter, or re-encounter, the villa from the second entrance--the central portal in the north garden wall--he would experience what is essentially a reversal, or negation, of the villa spatial units, such as they exist.

It will be remembered that in the sunken courtyard, the

visitor could see quite plainly the levels of the villa above and beyond, but could not, at first, know how to reach them (Fig. 54). Similarly, on the second terrace, he would see, first the courtyard he had just left (Fig. 51), then the walkways on top of the casino and containing walls (Fig. 50), and finally another garden above him. Again, he would find the stairs purposely obscured.

Throughout this progression, the guest's meanderings, looking for exits, were from east to west, or vice versa. In terms of the villa groundplan, it is a horizontal movement. His ascension from one terrace to the next was vertical, but always confined to internal stairways.

Coming to the giardino segreto, a horizontal movement is to no practical purpose, since it simply leads from one containing wall to the other. The principal axis is the vertical one, running north to south. Unlike the other vertical passages, in the giardino segreto it is entirely exposed, and located not only to either side of the area, but also in the centre (Fig. 2).

Walking down the central north-south axis from the garden gate, one is confronted, not by tempting levels further on, but by a carefully constructed perspective view, which changes the villa complex from one of a series of terraces, to what appears to be a solid architectural unit (Fig. 57). The first and second terrace have disappeared from sight--the guest sees only the four belvedere along the walkways, and the balustrade, fixing the edge of the walkway along the casino roof. The only one of the three terraces which is not, as it were, contained

(since it is accessible from the outside and has no hidden stair), provides one with a view of a closed and finite architecture.

When one examines the means by which this illusion is achieved, it becomes clear that it is a carefully planned, and anything but accidental, effect. The four corners of what becomes, visually, the solid block of architecture, are the belvedere. Two are oriented south-north on the east and west sides of the casino roof, and two, on a similar axis, on the east and west walkways at the boundary between the giardino pensile and the giardino segreto (Fig. 2). To make the south boundary, which is the balustraded casino walkway, appear illusionistically even closer to the viewer, Genga has made the two furthest belvedere higher than those at the garden boundary. 58

In order to continue the concept of a closed architectural mass beyond, an eventual view of the gardens below must be prevented for as long as possible. Does this motivation explain the irregular disposition of architectural elements in the two garden belvedere? In each case, the single archway penetrating the belvedere is in line with one of the vertical side paths of the giardino segreto, but is noticeably off-centre in respect to the walkway onto which it leads (Fig. 58). That is to say, there is more wall mass between the archway and the inside balustrade, than between that and the outside one. It is even more distinctly off-centre in regard to the belvedere itself. The archway is, in fact, shifted to the outside half of the belvedere--that is, to the side closest the exterior walls of the villa complex. This irregularity can hardly be described as aesthetic. It is, however, functional, in so far as the

relegation of apertures as close to the external walls as possible, in conjunction with solid wall to the interior of the unit, helps to obliterate a view of the gardens and terraces, as the guest approaches the belvedere from the path.

To one who had already come through the della Rovere Imperiale, this approach in reverse, as it were, must have convinced him that Genga's villa was something marvellous--a theatrical illusion effectively achieved in three dimensions, rather than in the two dimensions of a scenic backdrop. To the guest who first experienced the villa from the giardino segreto entrance, the surprise of discovering that the villa was not, as anticipated, a closed block, but a series of inviting gardens and terraces, must have been unprecedented in the early sixteenth century. As Smyth has suggested,⁵⁹ this concept very likely provided the inspiration for the sunken nymphaeum of the Villa Giulia.

Footnotes: Chapter III

1. See Chapter II, n. 19.
2. See also Mancini, pp. 28-9.
3. See *ibid.*, pp. 29-31.
4. Gronau, doc. XVIII. Gronau, p. 24, does not believe this reference is to the Imperiale. Cf. Smyth, "The Sunken Courts of the Villa Giulia and the Villa Imperiale," p. 306, n. 11. Gronau, p. 13, thinks the Villa Imperiale construction was begun c1530. Also Thode, p. 167, places the beginning of construction in the years 1529-30.
5. Patzak, p. 19.
6. Gronau, doc. XXV.
7. *Ibid.*, doc. XXXIX.
8. Patzak, p. 20.
9. Gronau, doc. XXXVI.
10. *Ibid.*, doc. XXXVIII.
11. See Patzak, pp. 20-1.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 18.

13. Patzak, p. 19
14. Gronau, doc. LXXV.
15. Ibid., p. 15; see also corresponding n. 5.
16. Ibid., p. 44.
17. See Seitz, p. 465, and Patzak, p. 95.
18. See also Pinelli, p. 192.
19. See James Ackerman, The Cortile del Belvedere, Vatican City, 1954, p. 141 n.; Arseni, p. 15; Kurt Forster and Richard Tuttle, "The Palazzo del Te," Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians, XXX, December 1971, p. 271.
20. See also Smyth, "The Sunken Courts of the Villa Giulia and the Villa Imperiale," pp. 306-7, n. 12.
21. See Patzak, pp. 137, 141-3, and Arseni, pp. 9 and 19.
22. Christoph Frommel, Die Farnesina und Peruzzis architektonisches Frühwerk, Berlin, 1961, pp. 99ff. See also Ackerman, The Cortile del Belvedere, p. 7.
23. See Luisa Gothein, Geschichte der Gartenkunst, I, Jena, 1926, p. 253; also Smyth, "The Sunken Courts of the Villa Giulia and the Villa Imperiale," p. 308.
24. See Pinelli, pp. 108 and 114-5.

25. Pinelli, p. 108. See also Thieme-Becker's entry for Girolamo Genga.
26. See Pinelli, pp. 137-9.
27. See Gronau, p. 44--a 1631 description of the Villa Imperiale: "Nel 2.^o piano sono n.^o 15 stanze ... piccole similmente da non potervi accomodare un letto."
28. Delle lettere di M. Bernardo Tasso, Padua, II, 1733, p. 242, from Pinelli, p. 191, n. 42.
29. Vasari-Milanesi, vol. VI, p. 317. See also Thode, p. 167.
30. See Gothein, pp. 251-2, where one reads that she considers it of importance that a scenographer was the designing architect.
31. See Mancini, p. 27, and Gothein, p. 253.
32. See Pinelli, pp. 140-1.
33. For full description of south facade, consult Patzak, pp. 81-8 and 150-72.
34. There are entrances from the two niches at either end of the central facade, which lead to the domestic quarters. These, however, would hardly concern the guest.
35. See Ricci, p. 127.
36. See Frommel, p. 54.

37. See Frommel, pp. 54-61; Elsa Gerlini, Giardino e architettura nella Farnesina, Rome, 1942, pp. 5-7; A. Schiavo, "Le architetture della Farnesina. II. Le scuderie," Capitolium, XXXV, no. 9, September 1960, pp. 3-9.
38. Foster, p. 311. See also David Coffin, "The Plans of the Villa Madama," Art Bulletin, XLIX, June 1967, p. 118.
39. Vasari-Milanesi, vol. V, p. 536. See also Forster, "The Palazzo del Te," p. 269, and A. Luzio and R. Renier, Mantova e Urbino, Torino-Rome, 1893, p. 184, n. 1.
40. Note also Francesco di Giorgio's stables in the Palazzo Ducale of Urbino. See Francesco di Giorgio Martini, Trattati di architettura, ingegneria e arte militare, ed. by Corrado Maltese, Milan, 1967, vol. II, pp. 340-1, and n. 3.
41. See Frommel, p. 61, and Gerlini, p. 7.
42. Wurm, p. 162.
43. See Frederick Hartt, Giulio Romano, New Haven, 1958, vol. II, fig. 408. The high attic was added later, and apparently was not part of Giulio's original design.
44. See *ibid.*, vol. I, p. 188, n. 14, and vol. II, fig. 410.
45. See also Patzak, p. 116.
46. Pinelli, pp. 137, 142, and 146.

47. Patzak, p. 172.
48. John Coolidge, "The Villa Giulia, A Study of Central Italian Architecture in the Mid-Sixteenth Century," Art Bulletin, XXV, 1943, pp. 217, n. 278.
49. Vitruvius, The Ten Books on Architecture, trans. by M. H. Morgan, New York, 1960, Bk. V, Chapt. VI: Plan of the Theatre, pp. 146-50.
50. Pinelli, p. 146.
51. Patzak, p. 172.
52. Ibid., pp. 137-42.
53. See Francesco Fariello, Architettura dei Giardini, Rome, 1967, pl. 38, for reconstruction.
54. See Patzak, pp. 97 and 31.
55. Mancini, p. 30.
56. See Patzak, p. 32, and Gronau, docs. LXIII, LXIV, LXVI, LXXIII.
57. See Patzak, p. 31.
58. An interesting problem which can be referred to at this point concerns the Sforza villa tower, which Vasari claims Genga built higher by 120 feet. Was Genga, in fact, trying

58 (cont'd) to bring it in line, illusionistically, with the perspectival axis he had drawn up, using the four belvedere (Fig. 57)? In such a case, the tower would presumably have been raised, if not when the belvedere themselves were being built, then certainly when the detailed plans were being drawn up. This does not contradict the theory that the tower was Genga's first restoration project in the Sforza villa, in 1523--the tower can easily have been built higher at a later date. If acceptable, the theory would explain what can rightly be called the extraordinary dimensions of the tower.

59. Smyth, "The Sunken Courts of the Villa Giulia and the Villa Imperiale."

CONCLUSION

In his monograph of 1908, Patzak examines the architecture of the Villa Imperiale in the light of his theory of villa evolution. Therefore, his reconstruction of the Imperiale as a Renaissance building emphasizes those elements and motifs which support his theory. The result is an incomplete, or, at the most, a one-sided view.

The problem of the villa's history can be approached from another angle, by first freeing the building from the limitations of such a theory, and examining it as a structure per se. Then, if desired, a new, or alternate, theory can be formulated on the basis of the conclusions derived from such an examination. It is this approach which the arguments presented in the thesis have tried to establish.

However, a building's history does not reveal itself by an examination of only its physical characteristics. Documents are required to chronologize, organize, and clarify the evidence. In the case of the della Rovere villa, the documents provide an excellent framework of reference. In regard to the Sforza villa, the documents are, to date, limited, and a subsidiary approach must be employed--the villa is juxtaposed to the Palazzo Prefettizio, a structure that is clearly its prototype, and for which there does exist a documented chronology of sorts.

Although documents are particularly useful in answering questions of chronology, they cannot always explain or elucidate the purpose and function of the architectural unit. Why was the fresco programme arranged in that particular order of eight

apartments in the Sforza villa? Why did Genga build the tower 120 feet high? Why are certain of the architectural elements anomalies in the context of an essentially classical structure? The answers to these questions can be found only by realizing that the villa is, above all, a functional unit, with a specific purpose or programme; and that, in order to be comprehended, it is necessary to experience the frescoes and the architecture as they were intended to be experienced.

To Patzak, the Sforza and della Rovere villas are incompatible in a sixteenth century context--he therefore treats, and analyses, them as two distinctly separate buildings. Possibly that is the most serious error he makes; it certainly prevents him from calculating the importance of the Sforza villa in the sixteenth century Villa Imperiale complex.

In purely visual terms, the austere Early Renaissance architecture of the Sforza villa, and the grand, classical statements of the della Rovere villa, do appear incongruous. But Patzak has not realized that, from the two most vital standpoints in the villa--the entrances--only one structure at a time can be seen clearly. What does remain in view of the other villa, is camouflaged. For example, from the main door of the Sforza villa, the della Rovere Imperiale is shrouded by the forest; from the entrance in the giardino segreto, the only part of the Sforza villa that is visible--the tower--has been brought in line with the belvedere.

It is obvious, then, that due to their common function and shared iconographical programme, the two structures become inter-related and interdependent, each an integral part of the Villa Imperiale.

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Fig. 1. The Villa Imperiale at Pesaro.

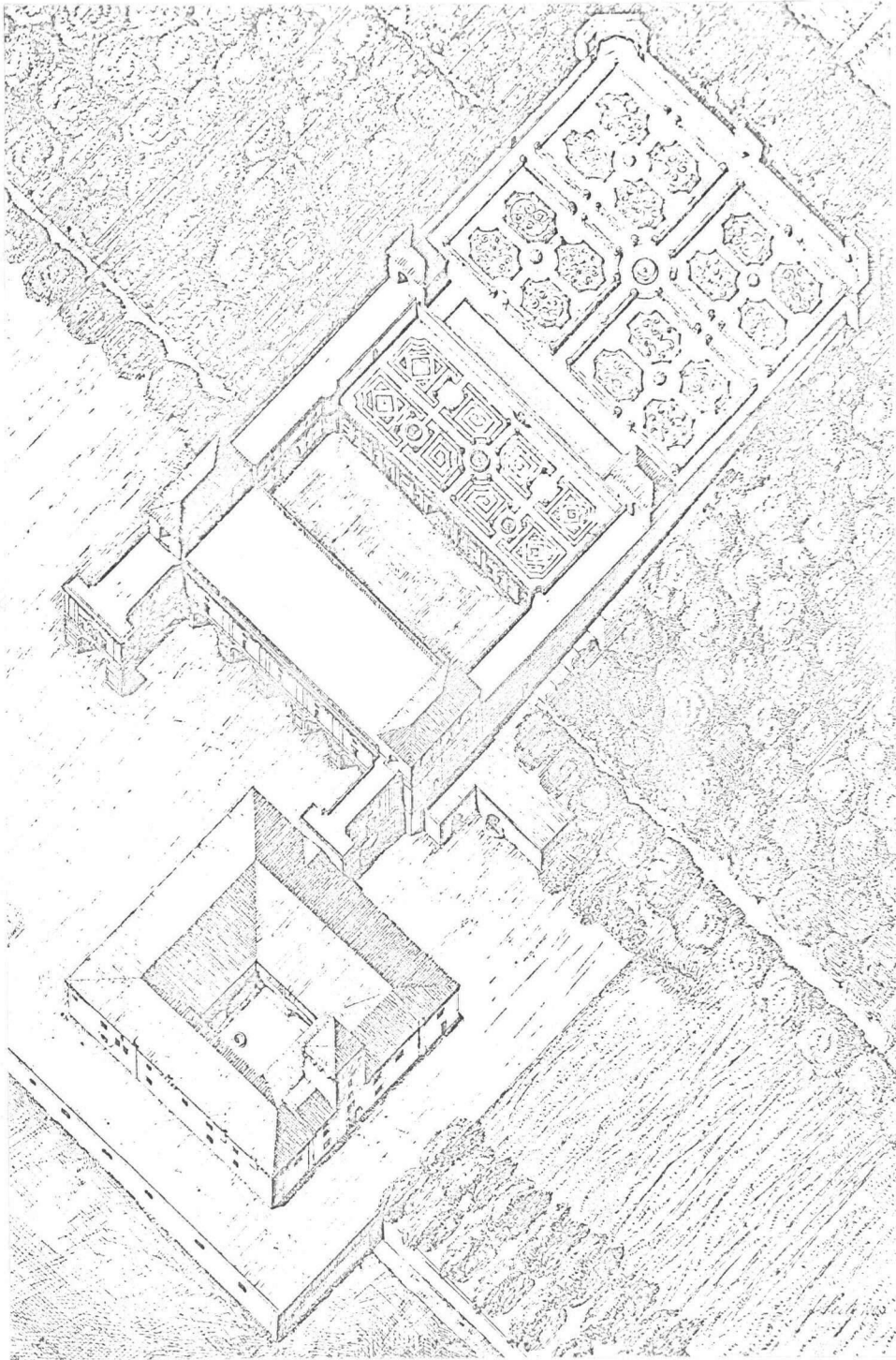


Fig. 2. The Villa Imperiale.



Fig. 3. Drawing of the Villa Imperiale by Minguzzi.



Fig. 4. Medal of Costanzo Sforza.



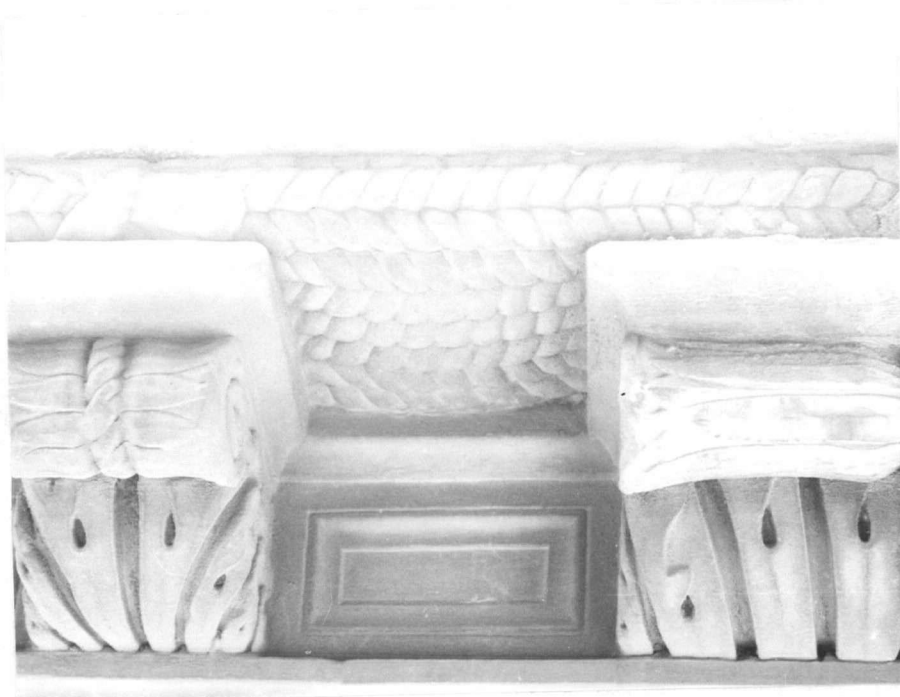
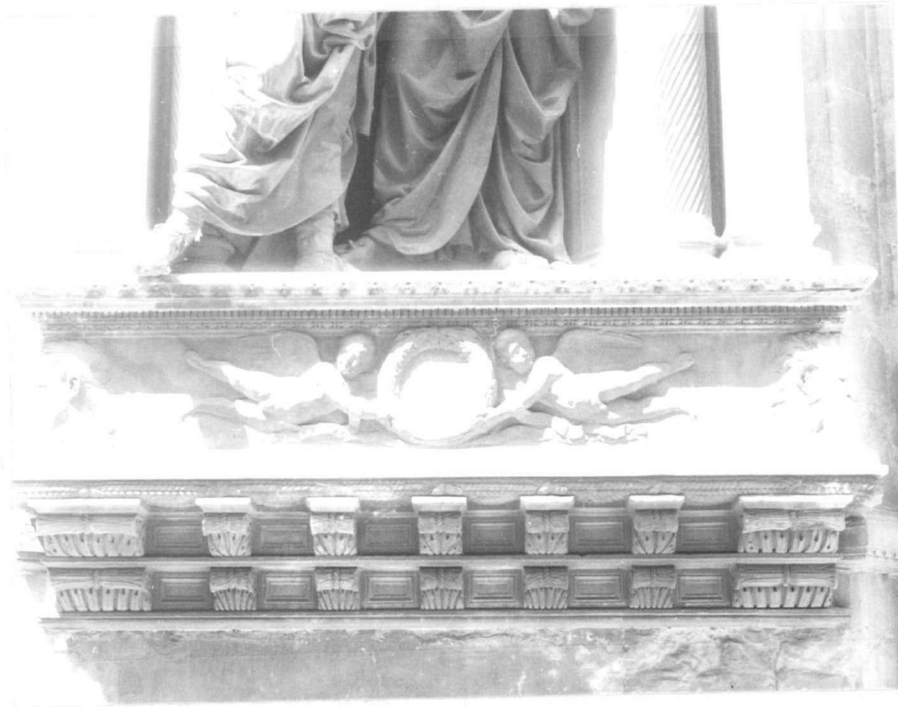
Fig. 5. The Palazzo Prefettizio of Pesaro.



Fig. 6. Entrance of the Sforza Villa Imperiale.



Fig. 7. Entrance of the Palazzo Prefettizio.



Figs. 8 and 9. Details of Donatello's niche of S. Ludovico on Orsanmichele, in Florence.



Fig. 10. Cortile of the Sforza Villa Imperiale.



Fig. 11. Arcade of the Palazzo Prefettizio.

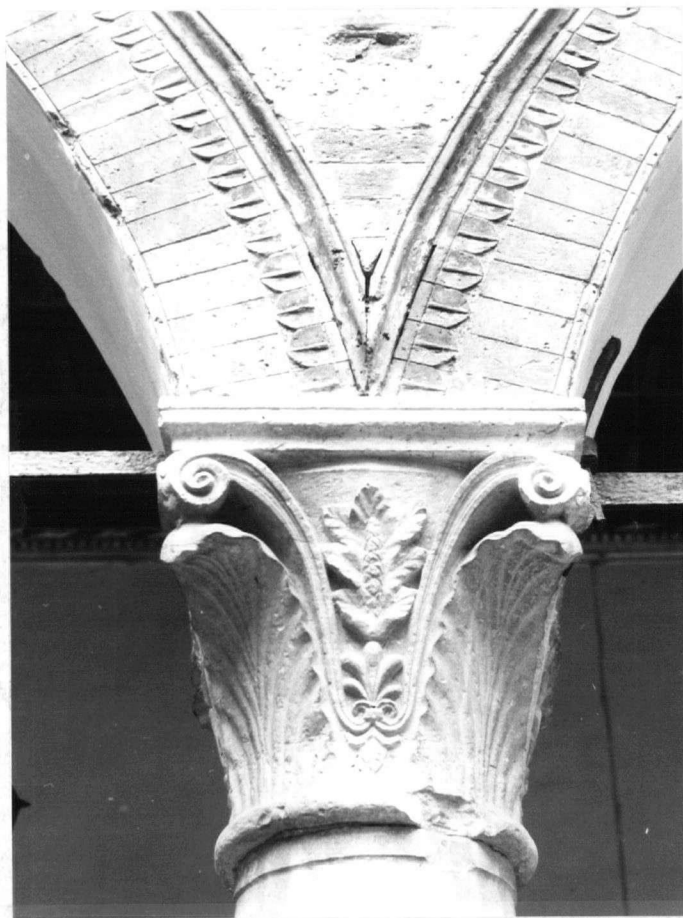


Fig. 12. Capital in the cortile of the Sforza Imperiale.



Fig. 13. Capital on the Palazzo Rucellai facade.



Fig. 14. Peduccio in the portico of the Palazzo Prefettizio.

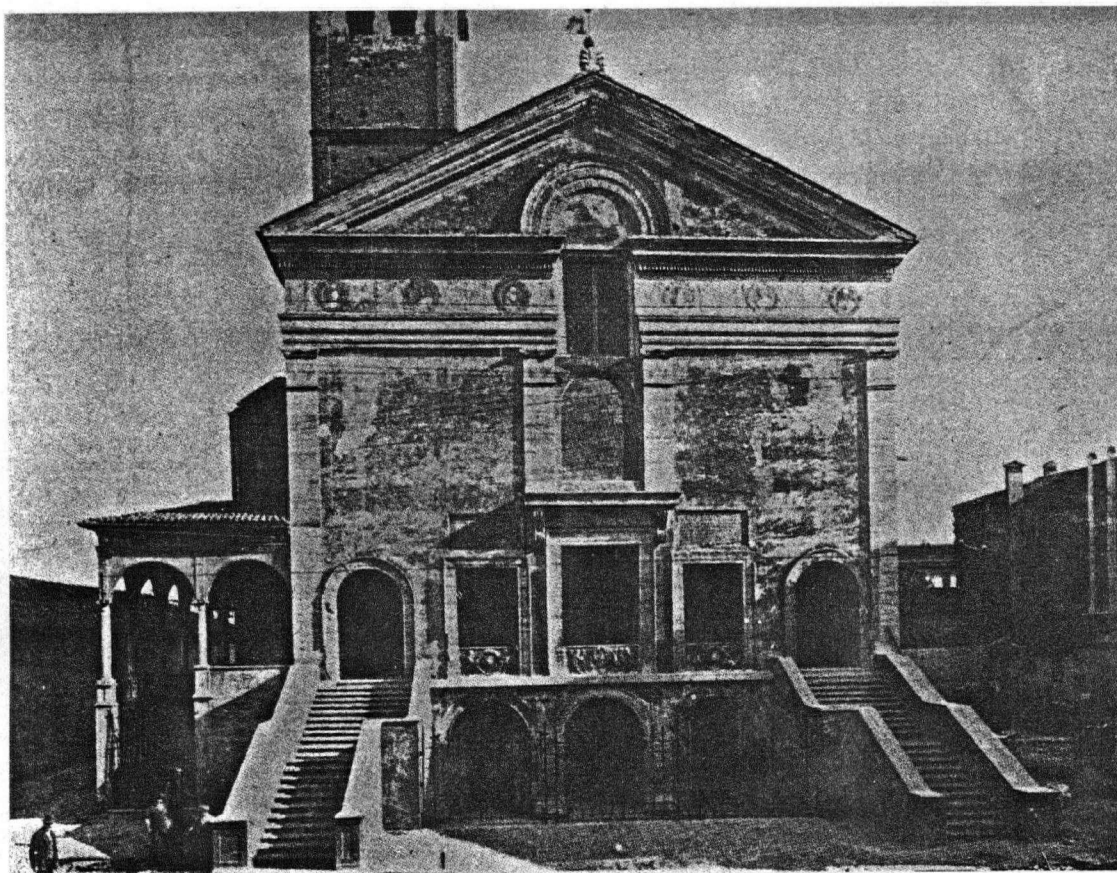


Fig. 15. S. Sebastiano in Mantua.

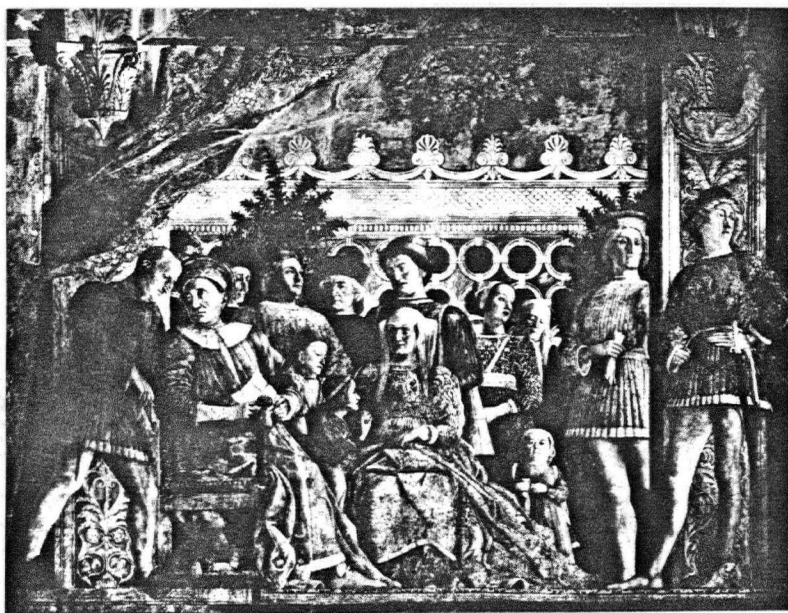


Fig. 16. Camera degli Sposi in the Palazzo Ducale, Mantua.

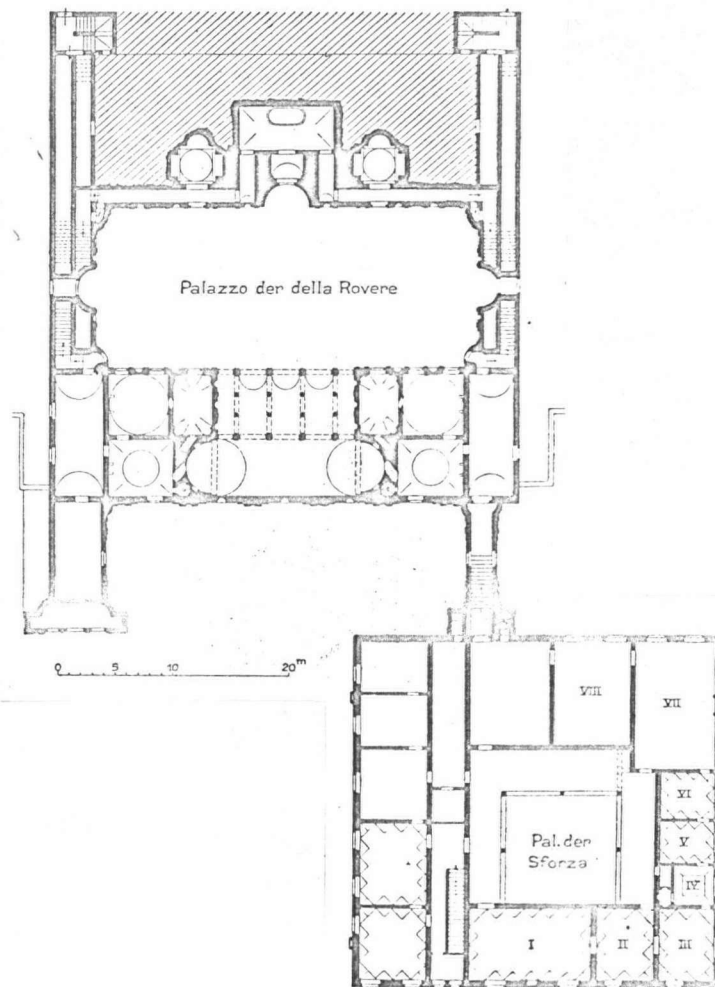
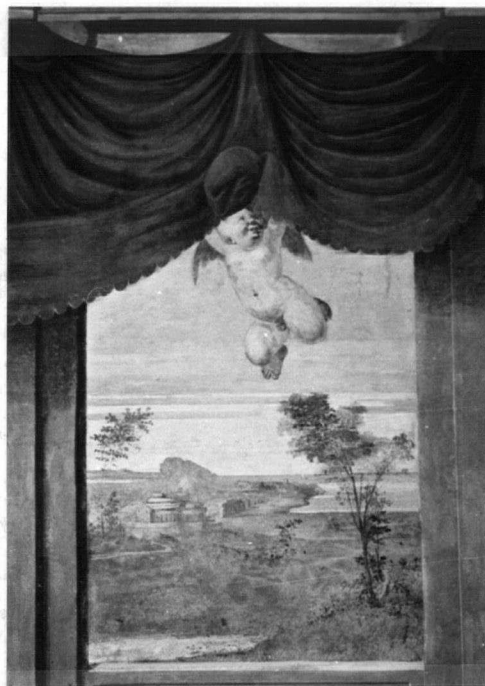


Fig. 17. Plan of the Villa Imperiale.



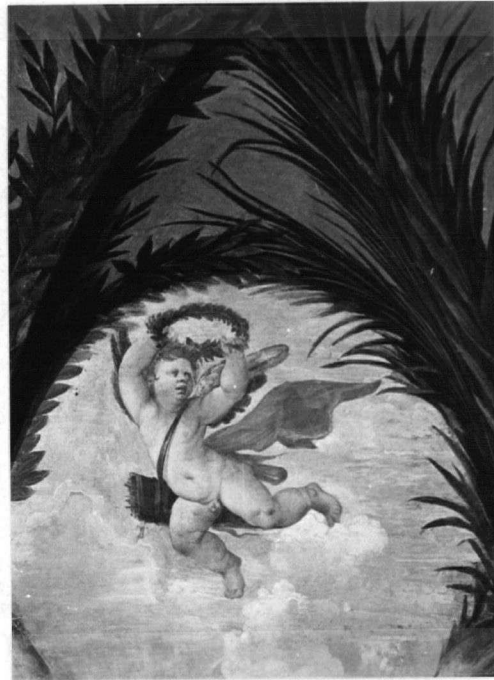
Figs. 18 and 19. Sala del Giuramento.



Figs. 20 and 21. Sala del Giuramento.



Figs. 22 and 23. Sala dei Cariatidi.



Figs. 24, 25 and 26. Sala dei Cariatidi.



Figs. 27 and 28. Camera dei Semibusti.



Figs. 29 and 30. Camera dei Semibusti.



Figs. 31 and 32. Gabinetto.

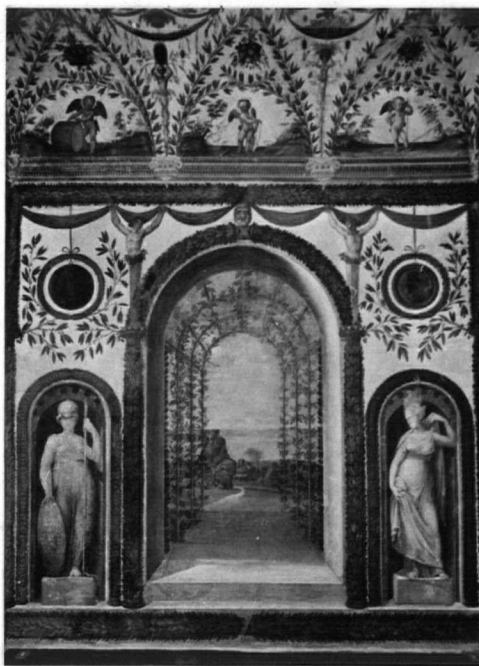
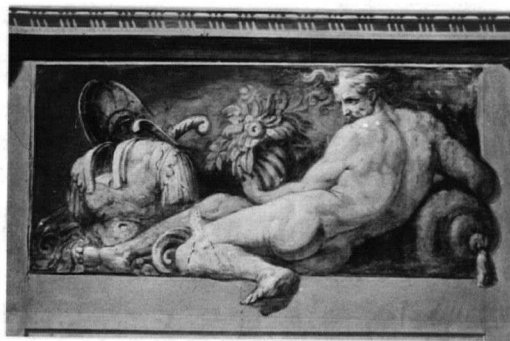


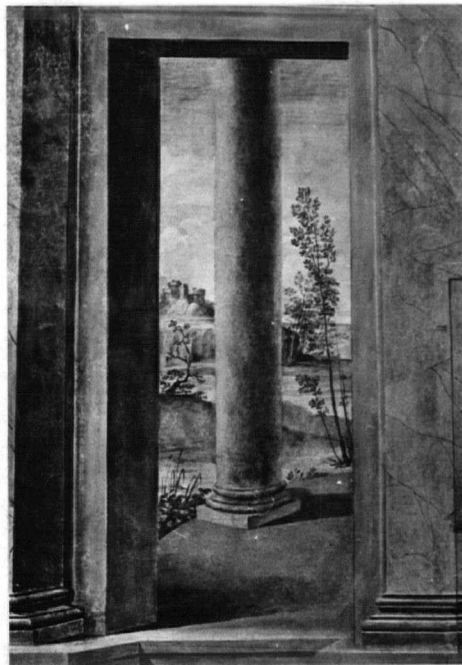
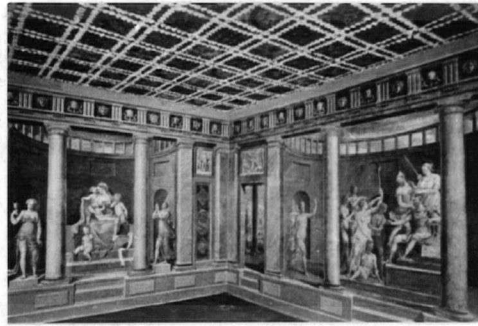
Fig. 33. Camera degli Ammorini.



Fig. 34. Camera delle forze di Ercole.



Figs. 35 and 36. Sala grande.



Figs. 37 and 38. Sala della Calunnia.



Figs. 39 and 40. Sala della Calunnia.

...rimasti del primo piano, e corrispetto del Palazzo di S. M. A. posto sul Monte Accio, oggi detto di S. ... (poco lontano dalla Città di Pistoia, detto l'Imperiale, perchè Federigo II. Imperatore, quando lo
fabbricò Alessandro Fiora Signore di Rovere, vi pose la prima pietra, e lo stesso Palazzo fu abitato dall'alta Torre, e poi di tutto il resto della nuova Fabbrica del Duca Francesco Maria I.
della Rovere, col disegno dell'Architetto Girolamo Ciampi.

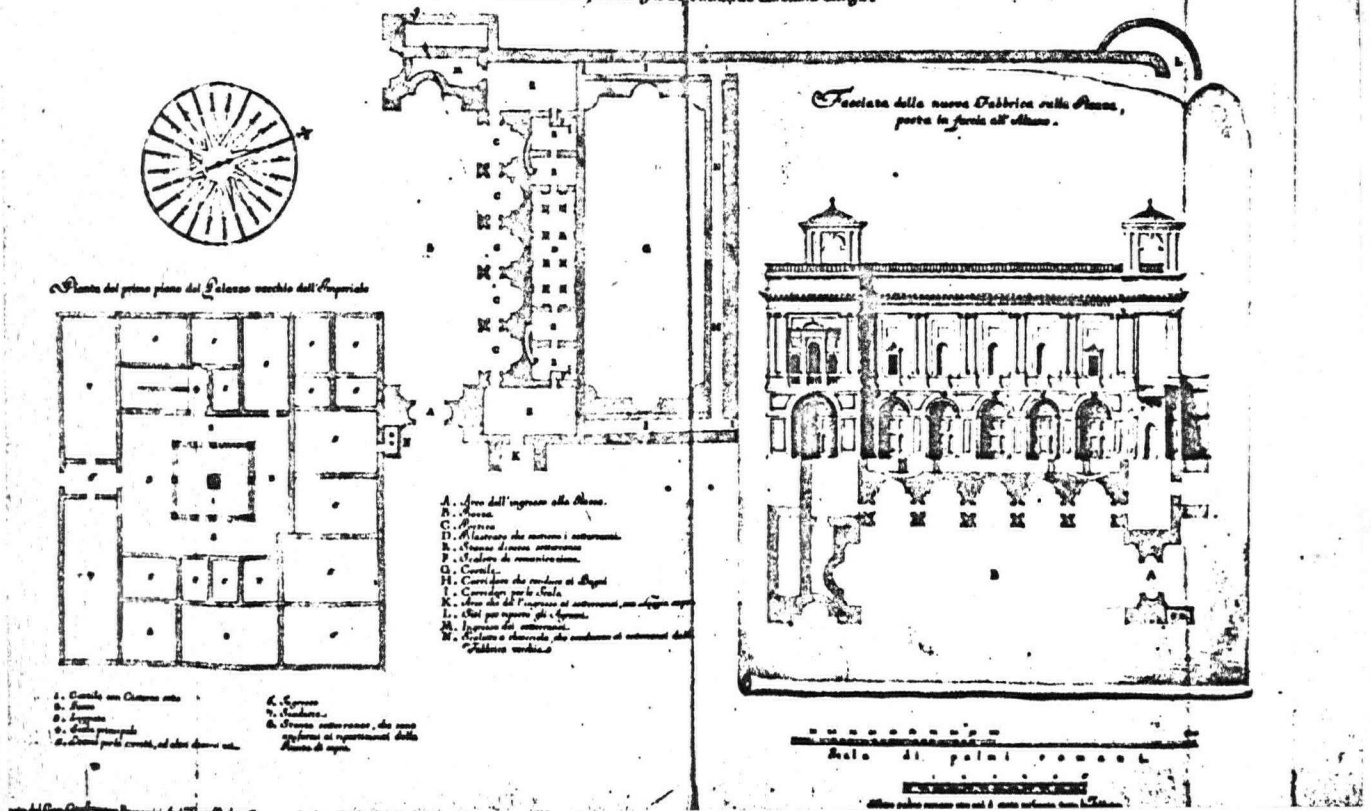


Fig. 41. Plan of the Villa Imperiale by Buonamici.

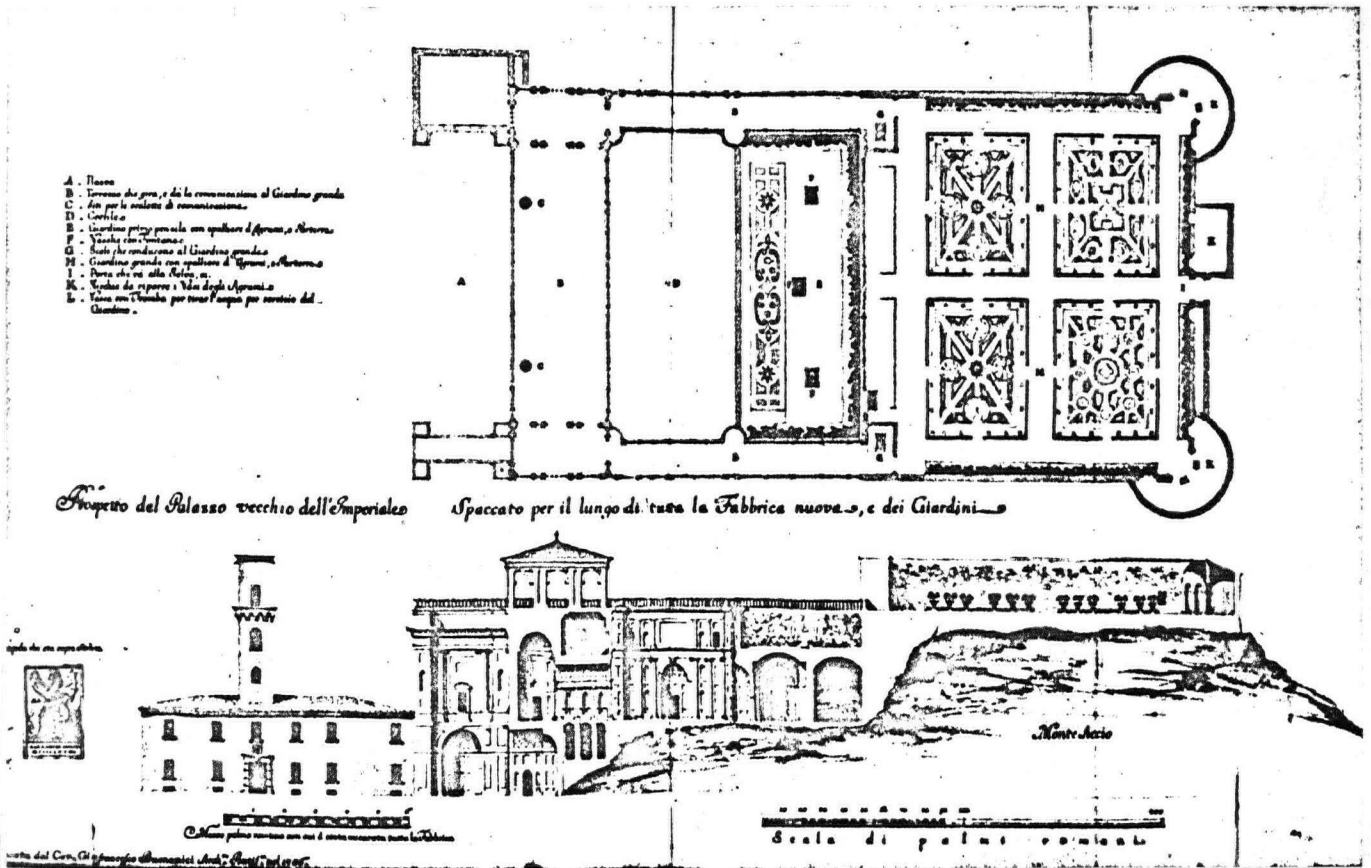


Fig. 42. Plan of the Villa Imperiale by Buonamici.

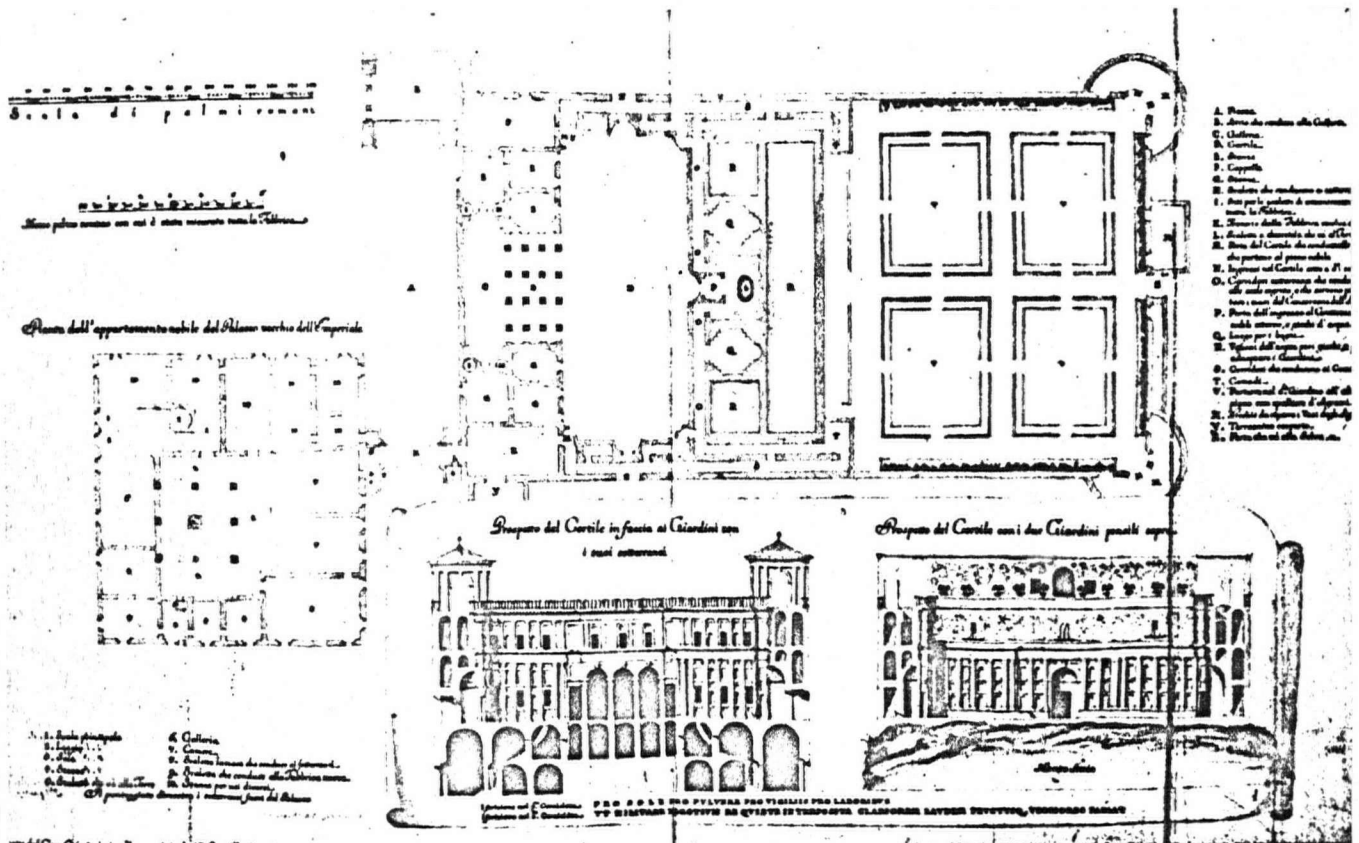


Fig. 43. Plan of the Villa Imperiale by Buonamici.

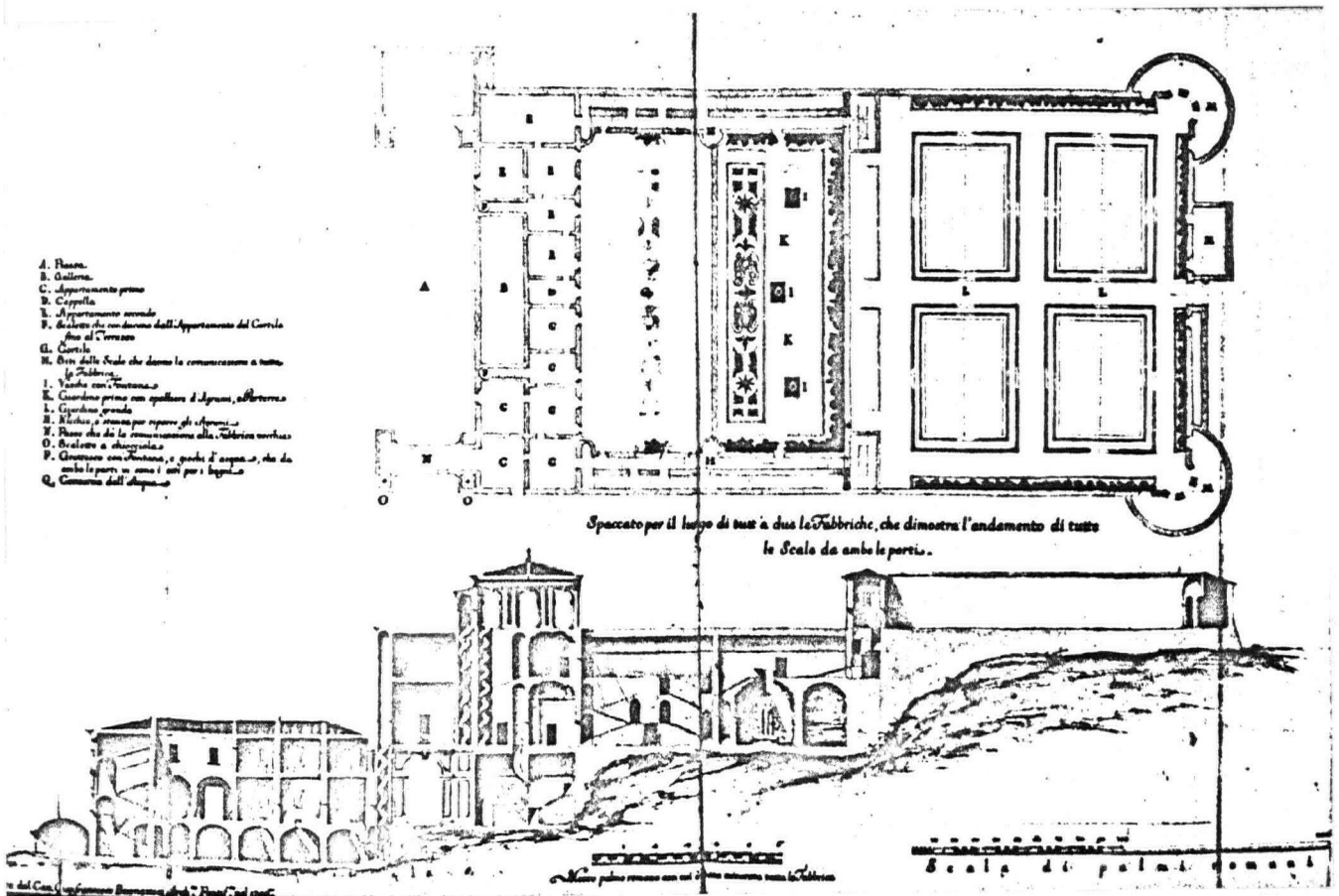


Fig. 44. Plan of the Villa Imperiale by Buonamici.

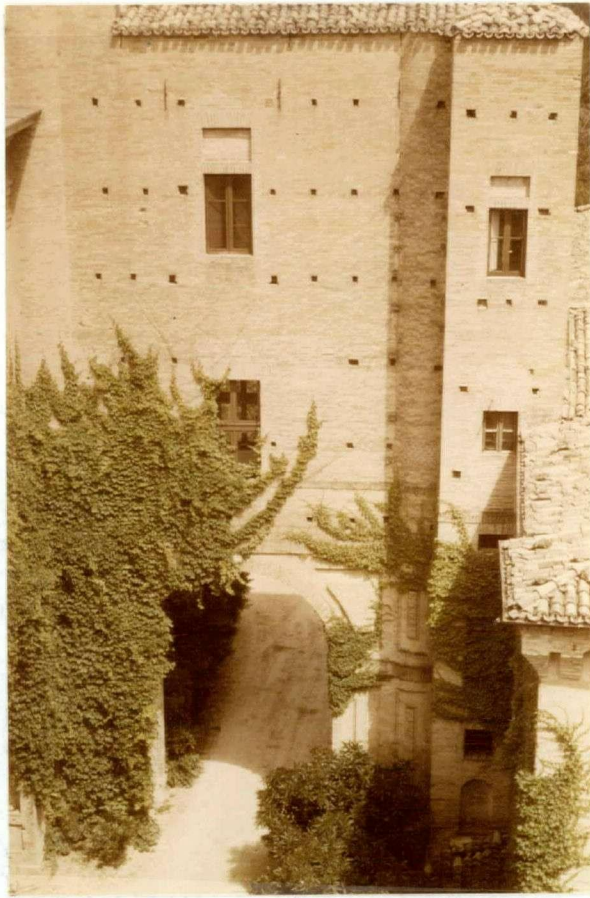


Fig. 45. Connecting wing, from west.

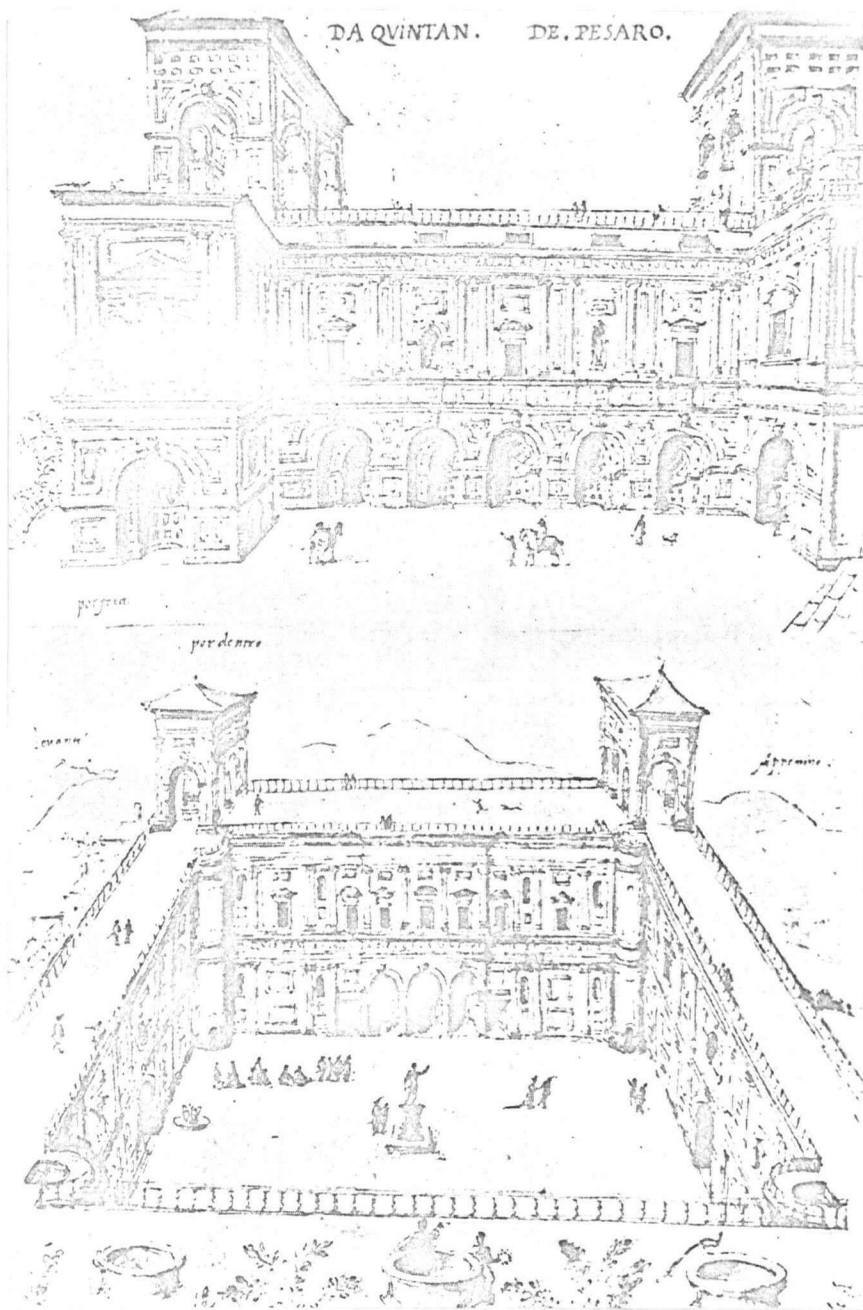


Fig. 46. Drawing of the Villa Imperiale
by Francisco da Hollanda.



Fig. 47. The Sforza Imperiale, east facade.

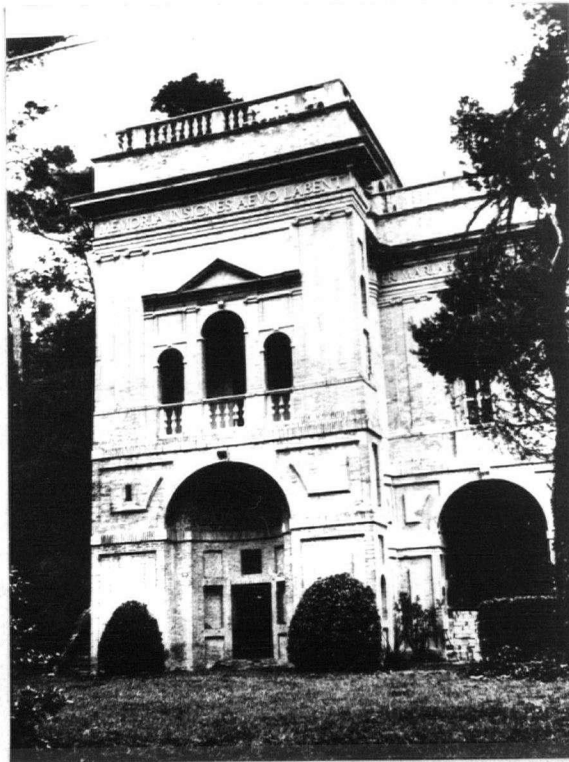


Fig. 48. The della Rovere Imperiale,
west projecting wing.

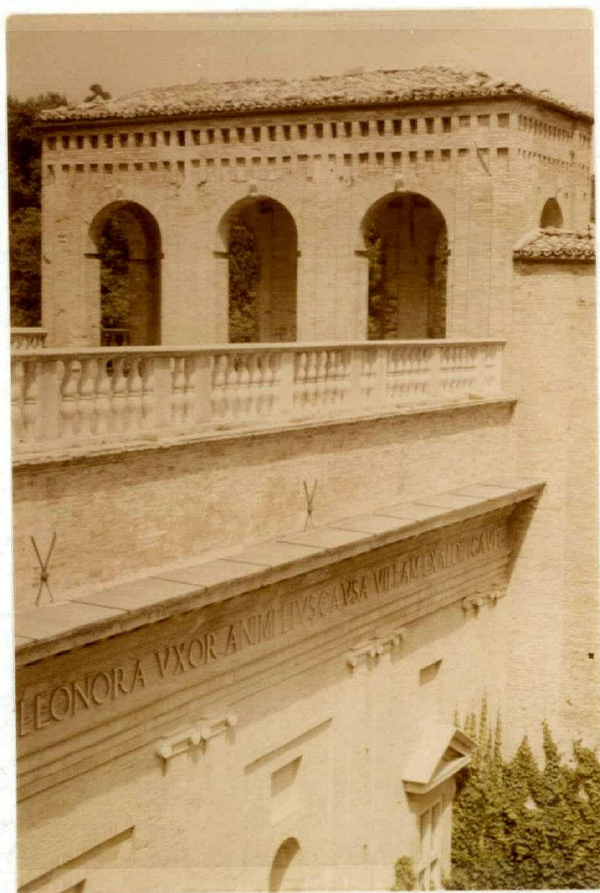


Fig. 49. Della Rovere Imperiale, south facade.

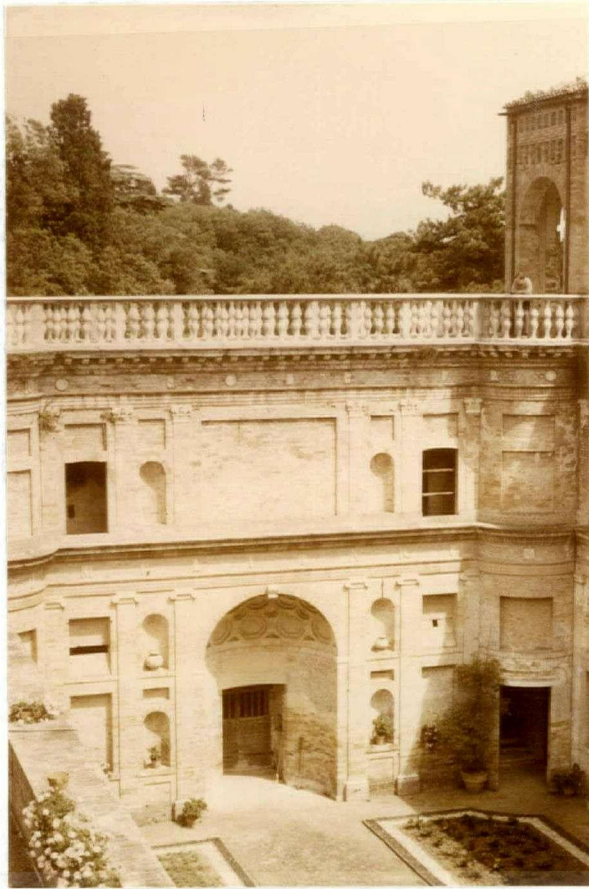


Fig. 50. Della Rovere Imperiale, sunken courtyard.

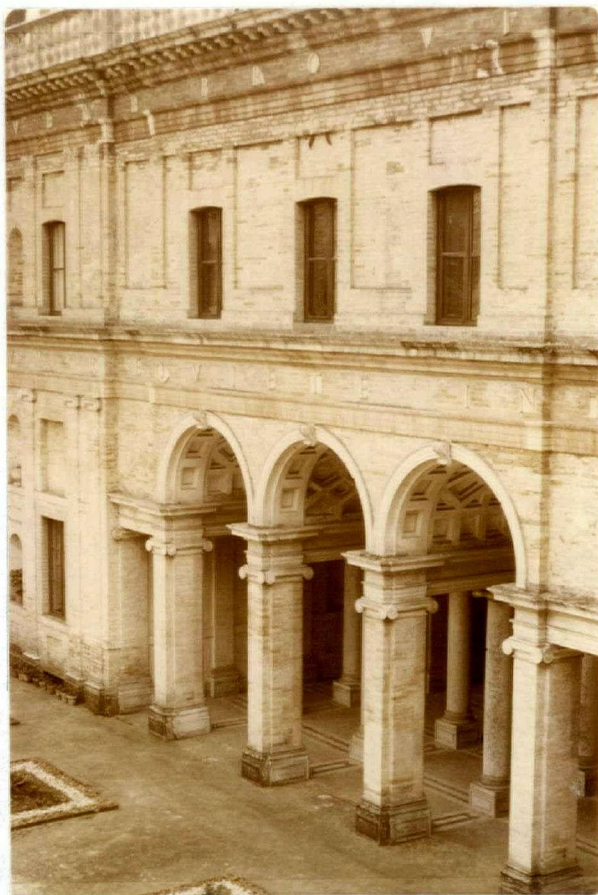


Fig. 51. Loggia of sunken courtyard.



Fig. 52. Detail of loggia.

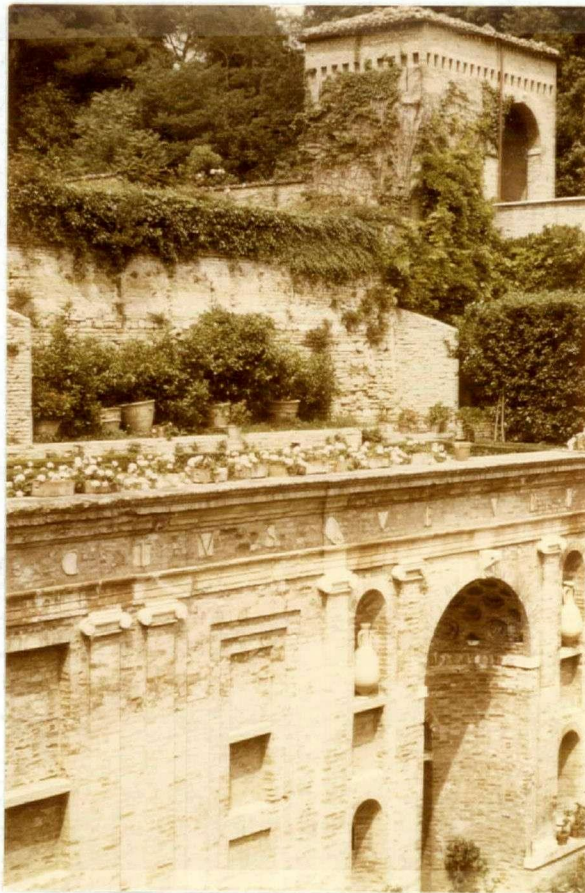


Fig. 53. Grotto and giardino pensile.

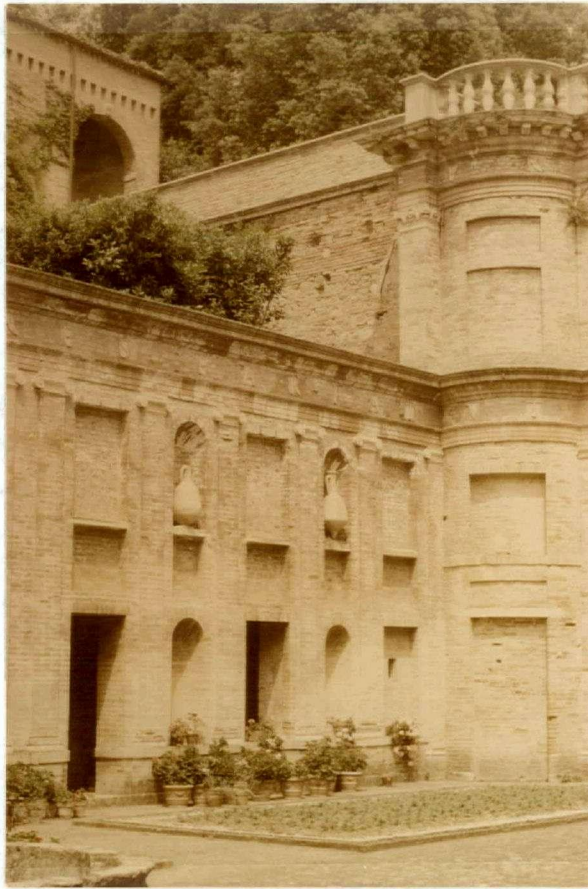


Fig. 54. Sunken courtyard, grotto wall.



Fig. 55. Giardino pensile.

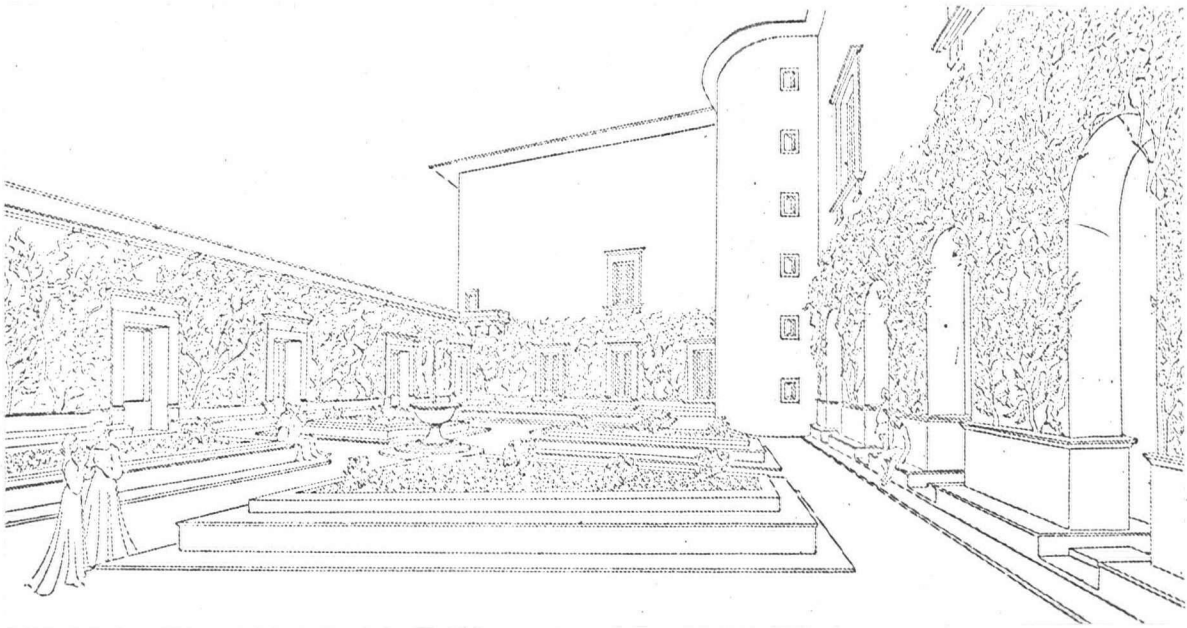


Fig. 56. Giardino pensile of the Palazzo Ducale, Urbino.



Fig. 57. From the gate in the giardino segreto.



Fig. 58. From the south belvedere, looking north to the giardino segreto.