

Sculptures in the Gardens – From the Historical Ages to the "Neo-embarrassing" Trends

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Abstract: Decorating the gardens with sculptures has a big past: the mythological themed statues had spatial organizing role from the Ancient Ages and they had surplus meanings beyond their original stories. They had the biggest popularity and propaganda role understandable for everyone, the clear intangible value in the Renaissance and Baroque Era, but the deities and other mythological figures appeared also in the later centuries. We can still find them today, often sunking to the level of the kitsch, losing their extra contents.

Keywords: space forming, surplus meaning, intangible value, popularity

1. Introduction

Figural decorations play a very important role in historical gardens, they have often space forming role: the space experience of the garden is strongly determined from the perception process of the statue, to which an underlying surplus content is usually added with a reference to the owner or to the function of the garden, clear for the visitors. These sculptures depict mostly ancient mythological figures (deities, nymphs, heroes) and animals, or other themes taken from the ancient works. Mythological themes created the possibility to refer to the owner's social position or an extremily important activity carrying an iconographic program in the gardens in the new Ages (e.g. the grottos in the Renaissance Medici-gardens in

Florence, Italy, commemorate the construction of the aqueduct by the Medicis). The sculptures and the various themes embodied in them often played a role in the propaganda already from the Ancient Ages (e.g. the personal patron of Emperor Augustus was Apollo, but we can meet also with the identification of the deity and King Louis XIV. in the whole baroque composition of Versailles). Below one of the most popular deity, Apollo will be presented in some form in gardens.

2. Materials and Methods

The evolution of sculptures in the overview of arts and history

The development of the styles of Greek sculptures can be traced back to the 9-8th century B.C. In the art of the Antiquity the formal features of the statues reached from the geometrical, linear patterns and sacrificial animal figures to the depictions carrying real human personalities [1]. This development had four important periods. The sculptures of Archaic Period (7-5th century B.C.) had the first traces of portraval ambitions, with the motives from the strengthening trade relations. The portrayal ambitions came later, with gradual development. It had four important periods: the sculptures of Archaic Period (7-5th century B.C.). the Classical Era (5-4th century B.C.) [2], the Hellenistic Period (320-30 B.C.) [3] and the so-called Roman Era (30 B.C. to 330 A.D.). With the strengthening trade relations and with the Roman military conquests, a new, fetishized revaluation of the human body was born. The Romans transported to Rome a lot of pieces of art as booties from the subjugation of Greek areas, which were publicly exhibited on the victory celebrations. As a result the Hellenistic arts had huge impact on the Roman society, and the copy of statues started, and the propagandistic role of these staues continued to increase. It became very fashionable to the people in higher social positions to possess Greek artifacts in the Roman Era, and to exhibit them in their houses and villas. However it was not a pure copying, they sought on the consistence of the semantic of the statue with its new environmentt. The manufacture of copies and their sales began meeting this increasing demand [4]. Of course, the main style groups of Antiquity were not separated in later ages, its bestknown example is the so-called Apollo Belvedere (Fig. 1.).

The dissolution of medieval social relations began in Italy early, at the turn of 13-14th century: the new system wanted to break with the medieval spirit. Thus, the Renaissance brought the discovery of the ancient world, it became a trend seek for the revitalism of Antiquity. The antiquities became very popular through the starting archaeological-featured interests: the ruins and statues had a big effect on garden architecture [5]. Following the "archaelogical" excavations in the 15-16th century, even more Ancient sculptures were found (e.g. the Apollo of Belvedere in 1493), so the Ancient works had increasing impact on the baroque sculptors, who

began to try to assess themselves to the antique predecessors [6]. The restoration of the numerous ancient statues helped the masters to continously works, and they could learn the ancient design and practice of carving. However the great Renaissance master, Michelangelo had a huge influence on the artists. The aim of the baroque sculpture is to representate the emotions and soul, the intense movement generated by the action, while stiring up the forms with sophisticated carving techniques. In addition it's highly important, that the sculptures interacts with their environment and with the viewers. Gianlorenzo Bernini's *Apollo and Daphne* reflects perfectly all of these principles (Fig. 2.).

The French Revolution from 1789 induced profound social and political changes: this Enlightenment gave a major intellectual background to the Classicism [7]. The most significant in this period was the pursuit on reasonableness and naturalness, and the desire of knowledge of the "historical past" to the "present". As a result the regular archaeological researches started. However the interests significantly increased to the Middle Ages and to the Eastern Cultures, parallel with the revitalization of classical ages. The national past turned into the spotlight with the decipherable past and with the development of civil societies. Sculptures in mythological themes are mostly in the context of arts (like Apollo and the muses), like at the Opera Garnier in Paris, built in Neobaroque style: its roof is decorated with the figures of *Apollo, Poetry and Music*, from Aimé Millet.

3. Results and discussions

The formal appearances of apollo in the historical gardens

Apollo's wide range of personality gave an excellent basis to become to a popular personality in the arts several centuries long. Apollo was one of the twelve Olympian gods: he is the deity of poetry, the harmonious music (the lute was a symbol of the rational human judgment), the civilized arts, and fortune telling and divination (Delphoi) [8], as well as the protector of flocks and herds. He was also the god of the light (Phoebus Apollo, it means shining Apollo; he was identified with the Greek Helios and the Roman Sol deities of Sun too, however this light meant also the truth and knowledge, viz. predictions), and the god of archery. But he possessed the ability of healing too [9].

It's easy to identify the deity, walking in the gardens, about his most important attributes (Fig. 4.): his physical beauty, the lute and other stringed instruments (music), a laurel wreath, or the four horse-drawn golden chariot (Sun), and sunbeams (it's also represented the god of the Sun). To his attending belonged the nine muses, the inspirations of music, poetry, dance, and liberal arts, with whom he

also was often together in the arts [10]. His another symbol was the snake, which, according to the mythological story, came from a cavity to kill the twins and their mother: but Apollo killed the serpent, and founded the oracle of Delphoi over this cavity. Apollo had rich and varied love stories, the best known relates to his unrequited feelings rose for the nymph Daphne [11]. Daphne fled from the deities love, and finally she had help from his father, the River Peneios: as Apollo grabbed her arm, the nymph turned to laurel tree. After that the deity made the laurel to his special tree: from that time the bests of arts and sports events were crowned with laurel (Fig. 2.).

The cult of Apollo in the gardens can be dated from the 1680s, because the sculptures about the deity in Versailles were made at that time, which were inspired by the significant ancient statue, the Apollo Belvedere. The statue of Apollo of Belvedere (Fig. 1.) is a Roman, 224 cm high marble copy about a Greek bronze (originally probably from the 4th century B.C.). The deity shows his youthful beauty, his eyes losts in the distance, he takes a step carefully. He raises forward his left arm, and a *chlamys* (shoulder cape) is sterned on it, and the right arm is lowered at his body. Some supplements were made by Master Montorsoli from the order of Pope Clement VII.: a left hand with bow, a right forearm and hand, which relied on the timber standing beside the deity (contrary the original composition could had arrows or Ivy-branches in his right hand; today in Vatican Museums). These supplements were removed from the statue only in 1924 [12]. This most popular ancient preview was partially or wholly copied in the gardens later (mainly with the supplements), one of the most outstanding examples is in Pavlovsk, Russia (Fig. 1.): its garden had two from this Apollo-type. This shape played primarily the role of propaganda, or it showed the owner's patronage activities.



Figure 1: Apollo Belvedere (source: Spivey and Squire 2005 p. 302, Fig. 464.), its bronze copy in Pavlovsk (panoramio.com), and Apollo Served by the Nymphs group in Versailles, by Girardon, François (superstock.com)

The story of Apollo and Daphne was similarly popular [13], which became the most popular with the birth of the significant baroque master, Gianlorenzo Bernini's work (1598-1680), *Apollo and Daphne*. He made this sculpture in 1622-

1625, and it widely validates the ambitions of the Baroque (today in Villa Borghese, Rome; Fig. 2.): this lively composition grabbed in one moment the long series of events of the persecution, the nymph's cry for help fleeing from the deity, and the transfiguration. Bernini took the moment from that process, when the startled nymph starts to turn to the laurel tree to escape from the god's embrace [14]. The light and shadow effects, achieved by the structures of shaping, play an important role in this composition: the finely polished surface of the naked bodies is in a sharp contrast with the deity's soft, but rough cape and with the rough bark of the tree, and Apollo's disheveled locks of hair are also on the contrary with the nymph's fine hair [15]. Numerous versions and copies of Bernini's work are in the historical gardens, mainly in Baroque gardens. These versions has usually weaker effects and quality than the original sculpture. This statue used to play a role in the gardens for recreations or relaxing (so-called Lustgartens).



Figure 2: Bernini, Gianlorenzo: Apollo and Daphne (source: Kelényi 1985 p. 86.), and the same theme in the baroque gardens of Großsedlitz and Belvedere (photographs from the author)

Apollo in the ancient Roman gardens

In the gardens of the Ancient Roman Empire the sculptures were mostly about the fauna, and the religion, with full-length statues or reliefs of deities. From the view of the gardens the houses (domus) of Pompeii are extremely important, where often belonged a smaller or larger garden to the house. While sculptures of the smaller houses tried to imitate the statues of rich houses with miniature copies, at the larger houses opened the possibility for deluxe decorations [16]. The Casa del Citarista was one of the biggest residences in Pompeii, which was set up with building two big houses together. The three peristyle yards were decorated, mainly with numerous small bronze sculptures, like the Apollo with the lute. A similarly prominent house is the Casa del Menandro, where the spacious, well-helled house with big central yard was decorated with a nearly life-sized marble Apollo with griffins bird and laurel wreath.

Apollo and the renaissance garden art

The renaissance gardens across Europe were going back to the ancient predecessors both in their orderly, geometric formal world, both in the themes of sculptures: great examples are the reinterpretings of the ancient works, not only in Italy, but also northwards from the Alps [17]. For example at the garden of the Valdstein (Wallenstein)-palace in Prague, Czech Republic, has importance. The palace of General Albrecht von Wallenstein was built as the first secular Baroque palace in the city for representation, directly at the foot of Prague castle, from 1620s. But its garden has rather more details and buildings in Renaissance and Mannierist style (e. g. great hall, the aviary, and the huge grotto wall). The garden is decorated with numerous sculptures with mythological theme, the two most often shaped figure is Hercules and Apollo. One of the Apollos is at the boundary wall from the south, in a niche: the deity traits feminine details, and he holds in his right hand a lute, his left hand is resting on a runk, his face and posture is very similar at the opposite standing Diana, at the nortwestern wall. The other statue of Apollo is in the central part of the garden, in the main axis of the great hall: the deity is one from the eight bronze sculptures, with offensive pose, with bow in his left hand and touching the quiver with his right hand. These bronze statues show fighting scenes, referring to the owner, and they were originally the works of Adrien de Vries: the sculptures stolen by the Sweden in 1648, the figures of nowadays are copies from the 1920s.

Apollo in the Baroque gardens

The shaping of Baroque gardens, in contrast to the earlier periods, was an integral part of the new architectural conception, they were treated as a unit, the principle of formation of the gardens were the same to the castles. According to this principle nor on the buildings or in the gardens were the statues an end in itself, but they were the part, the basic ingredients of the comprehensive program of the whole ensemble, which carried political or ideological messages too [18]. The most powerful guiding principle of propaganda is in one of the most important Baroque gardens, in Versailles, France. Louis XIV. ordered the building of Versailles from the original hunting castle [19], the work started leading by André le Nôtre in 1662: the former garden has undergone an intense restructuring, the existing axis and parterres were partly retained, and the Apollo-fountain (Apollo wateres the horses of the chariot of Sun) was developed. The central baroque garden, the Petit Parc was finished in 1665, but the parc enlarged from 1693 to the end of 18th century. Numerous sculptures with mythological themes were placed in the garden: 24 pieces, large marble statues have been commissioned in 1674. Apollo playes the biggest role in the themes, his central character has a strong political content: this content runs through the whole castle and the garden, Apollo

is the symbol of Louis XIV., the King of the Sun. The two prominent elements are the *Apollo-fountain* and the grotto of *Apollo Served by the nymphs*. The Apollo-fountain is in the main axis of the garden: the deity erupts with his horses from the water on the chariot of Sun, created by Jean-Baptiste Tuby in 1668-1670 [20]. The group of Apollo and the nymphs [21] was created to a grotto in one of the *bosquets* by François Girardon in 1666-1673, as a strong element of the garden (Fig. 1.). The group shows the deity with six nymphs: their appearance shows classical, antique forms, and the main figures follows the Apollo Belvedere. The live-like setting is also a Hellenistic feature, however the grouping follows already the style of Nicolas Poussin. The composition is made up from horizontal layers, symmetrical on the axis appointed by Apollo, but the relationship between the layers unfortunately is not formed.

Much simpler and more typical compositions to Versailles are in several Baroque gardens, the most popular are not only the single statues, but the pairs too, like Apollo and Daphne. A very nice example is for this latter in Großsedlitz, Germany: this garden holds the baroque structure also in nowadays. The history of the garden goes back to 1719, when Count August Christoph von Wackerbarth acquired the estate to build here his resting place with garden. The complex was enlarged and rebuilt by the order of Augustus II. the Strong from 1723, which was used by the Saxon rulers as a representative Lustgarten until 1756. The new plan of the garden showed a regular baroque design, situated on more terraces, where the height differences were bridged with wide stairs and cascades. [22]. The garden is decorated with numerous statues: the sandstone figures were created by the members of the Pormoser-school, which means the peak of the Saxon sculpture of the 18th century. These sculptures depicts antique deities, the Four (then-known) Continents, the Four Elements, and mythological couples in love. These eight couples were placed in the arc of the central bosquet, each of them frames the entrances: one of them shows Apollo and Daphne (Fig. 2.), this composition is in close kinship with Bernini's work. However the Saxon statue can't express so much emotion and momentum: the composition captures also here the moments of the persecution and the tarnsformation into tree, but the lower maintenances of the arms make this composition restrained.

We can find the most examples about the single statues. A lot of sculptures with highest importance and quality, are situated at the western edge of Vienna, in Schönbrunn. The garden is considered the peak of the Austrian garden-architecture, and it still retained its Baroque features. A hunting area was at the site of the garden a still in the 16th century, the constructional works began by Johann Fischer von Erlach's plan after the Turkish Invasion, from 1690. The castle was completed in 1700, and after that Maria Theresa ordered the enlarging and rebuilding of the

mansion and the garden, from 1743: in the garden the area of the Great Parterre was expanded and new, star-axes were opened. Other significant objects (e. g. Gloriette and the so-called Roman Ruins) were built later, then the parc became to opened for the public in 1779. The expanding of the garden continued in more steps from the end of the 18th century, e.g. the Palm House was built [23]. Two Apollo statues and more mythological figures are in the garden, connecting to Apollo, like his son Aesculapius and his sister Diana. One of the Apollos [24] was placed in the so-called Western Bosquet, at the Rosarium (rose garden) in 1779: the work of Johann Baptist Hagenauer shows the deity as a young man with arrow, with the effect of the Apollo Belvedere on it. Apollo and Diana stood in the original structure at the ends of a 140-meter-long wild rose trail, symbolizing the Sun and the Moon. The other Apollo [25] is standing on a high pedestal at the Great Parterre at the tree-wall of the bosquets, with nearly two dozen other statues (these sculptures decorated originally the corners of the parterres, but they have been moved to the bosquets). This Apollo, the work of Wilhelm Beyer, shows the deity with laurel wreaths in his two hands, and his left hand rests on his lute. This composition shows Apollos as the deity of truth-telling and the Lord of the oracle in Delphoi.

An other important Baroque garden in Vienna is the complex of Belvedere, built by the order of Prince Eugene of Savoy in 1715-1723: Apollo has several sculptures as the deity of the Sun and Arts. Also this garden was opened to the public for Maria Theresa's request in 1779 [26]. A mythological program went along the whole garden symbolizing the rising of the prince: the Lower Belvedere means the Underworld and the Earth (i.e. the statues of Pluto and Proserpina), and the Upper Belvedere represented originally the Parnassus (the residence of Apollo and the muses) and the Olympos (the residence of the deities). In the northern part of the Lower Belvedere is a sculpture with the pair of Apollo and Daphne: it captures the moment of becoming to laurel tree, by the god pursued nymph's foots are already in tranformation, but the intensity of emotion and momentum of this composition is behind Bernini's statue, or the sculpture in Großsedlitz (Fig. 2.). Two fountains are located in the heart of the garden of Upper Belvedere: the eastern Hercules-fountain suggests Prince Eugene's talent as a general. The western Apollo-fountain displays the skinning of the satyr Marsyas (Marsyas called Apollo with excessive courage to a flute competition, but Apollo won, who had a cruel revenge: he skinned the satyr alive) [28], which represents the victory of the culture over the unbridled nature, and Apollo as the leader of the muses also refers Prince Eugene's role in artistic patronage.

Apollo sculptures in the landscape gardens

The composition elements of landscape gardens show contrary principles to the Baroque gardens: in the period of Classicism rather informal visual axes were identified in the gardens with the objects (building or sculptures), however the number of statues decreased. The strong political content was partly pushed back, the scientific valuable archaeological excavations of this era had a new emphasis, to the "pumping" of the fresh-known ancient works. In the period of landscape gardens the gardens were designed as a part of the natural environment, on more areas "cultural landscapes" were created, and they had also teaching roles, like in the Garden Empire of Wörlitz, Germany, as well in complex of Lednice-Valtice, Czech Republic.

The Garden Empire of Wörlitz was named after the first and largest landscape garden of Germany, in Wörlitz: this 112 hectares sized parc was built from the 1760s. The interceptions of the builder, Prince Leopold Friedrich III. were giving functions to the garden beside impressing the visitors: he wanted practical utilities, architectural, garden-architectural and agricultural trainings. Within this framework the biggest part of the garden, and the buildings, and also the central castle was opened for the visitors [29]. Numerous mythological figures are here, thus Apollo on several places. A small object has a very special value: the so-called *Warnungsaltar* [30] was made to the memory of Friedrich Wilhelm von Erdmannsdorf, the architect of the buildings in Wörlitz. The 1.4 m high sandstone altar on two-stepped is the earliest memorial of monument and nature conservation, from 1800. On the cylinder represented relief of Diana, Apollo and the muses warns: "*Wanderer, achte Natur und Kunst und schone ihrer Werke*." (Wanderer, appreciate the Nature and the Arts, and preserve their works!; Fig. 3.).



Figure 3: The Warnungsaltar with the figure of Apollo, in Wörlitz (photographs from the author)

The Temple of the Tři Grácie (Fig. 4.) was built as a part of the cultural landscape between Lednice and Valtice: the two castles, their gardens and the

landscape around them were treated as a whole composition, enriched by many buildings in the visual axes (*eye-catcher*). Both Lednice and Valtice have a history going back to the 13rd century, but they lived a significant era as the summer residence of Lichtenstein family from the 17th century, and the landscape gardens were created around the big ponds in the 18-19th century. The small building of Tři Grácie was built in the 1820s: the semicircular Kolonnade is straddling the statue of the three graces, Pallas Athena, Venus and Diana (originally in the mythological story the three graces were the incarnation of beauty, kindliness and charm, and their typical depiction, turning towards each other and their arms on the shoulders each other, born in the Classical-Hellenistic Periods) [33]. Full-length statues of the muses, deities (e.g. Apollo) and scientists are in the niches behind the columns of the Kollonade.



Figure 4: The Temple of the Three Graces with Apollo, in the cultural landscape of Lednice-Valtice (photographs of the author)

4. Conclusion

The satues has continuing importance from the Ancient times, they obtained specific surplus content over the time, and they referred also on the functions of the gardens. The continued existence of mythological stories had an integral part in everyday life, both in spatial structure, as well as the carried underlying meaning point of view. While the aim was even more to recall an idyllic Arcadian landscape in the 16th century (the allegorical figures, the mythological scenes represented this "longing"), a much stronger political message was in the background in the 17th century. The gardens were often decorated with the statues of main deities (Jupiter, Juno, Hermes, Diana, Apollo and Neptun were the most popular figures), but other figures, demigods and heroes (e.g. Hercules) were in the gardens, usually connecting to the deities.

Nevertheless the question arises, if such statues are placed in the gardens of nowadays, what kind of meaning can they have? Have they the same meaning? Or they are only the embodiments of the kitsch? What can perpetuate a sculpture of a

Greek deity, a medieval king, a lion symbolizing the power in a small family garden to the future generations? The intangible value ported over the centuries are unfortunately lost, or strongly reduced.

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