



VILLA BETTONI

Villa Bettoni
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A monumental garden, the only one of its kind in the whole of Lombardy, that embraces a most imposing and gracious villa – all of which set like a jewel among the peaks of the mountains and the prettiest shore of Lake Garda. This is the historic home of the counts Bettoni, in Bogliaco, where the family's descendants still live. In the 18th century, with the family's fortune firmly established, to the point where they enjoyed the privilege of hosting the Emperor Josef II of Hapsburg during his visit to Limone sul Garda, the sixteen Bettoni brothers, who were about to receive the title of counts from the House of Austria, decided to build themselves a house “worthy of representing them in the world”.



They could have settled in Brescia, where they knew that the patricians would treat them with respect and as their peers, although some among the old aristocracy of that city were perplexed by the fact that they had had to “deal”, namely do business, “where business here is foolishly deemed a mechanical art”. Or they could have elected to live in Tyrol, in the Castle of Scenna that they had recently purchased together with its feudal titles. However, because they could not forget “the sky of their native lake and of their birthland”, the counts Bettoni decided to expand the old 17th century family villa with a massive refurbishing that would “make it deserve the name of Palazzo”.

The Palazzo would stand on the shore of Lake Garda, as count Carlo in 1753 wrote to his brother Gian Maria who lived in Genoa: “as we are able to appear in the first ranks in that place, it would not be convenient for us to be in the second ranks elsewhere”, and “here in the Villa we can be distinguished by a place whose qualities could not be found elsewhere in the entire Veneto State, and very few of which in all of Lombardy. Thereby, what we spend in the City would never elevate us above the others, so I prefer to distinguish myself in the Villa rather than be like all the rest in the City.”





At the centre of a vast park containing olive and citrus fruit groves, crossed by delightful little valleys, abounding in laurel trees and bushes, Villa Bettoni's garden of delights is made even more unique by the spectacular architecture that harmoniously links it to the Palazzo. This architecture is called 'Perspective' and by exploiting perspective effects guides the viewer's eyes to the summit of a tree-lined avenue where a small temple dedicated to Apollo was supposed to be.

Of the Bettoni brothers who supervised the renovation on the villa, Carlo, who had supervised most of the works, seemed rather contrary to this project. Most probably, in his capacity as agricultural engineer, he was against sacrificing productive plants for a Perspective architecture (even though it included two lemon groves and various agricultural buildings). His brothers Gian Maria first and Delay later supervised the works directed by the Florentine architect Amerigo Vincenzo Pierallini. Gian Maria lived in Genoa and Delay in Naples, and it was in these cities that were being influenced by the international styles of the time, especially at Court, that the two brothers had developed a taste for the grandeur disliked by Carlo, who at least in the garden believed that the construction should be based solely on natural elements.



The gardens of Villa Bettoni, like the Palazzo, are embellished by statues by Gian Battista Locatelli and have three main fountains fed by water springs inside the park, an artificial cave modelled on similar ones in Genoa, and two magnificent terraces that by crossing the road connect the park to the main structure of the villa, extending out onto the lake.

