

POLYTECHNIC OF TORINO
FACULTY OF ARCHITECTURE 2
Degree in Architecture
Honors theses

Villa Grock in Imperia. Analysis and theories for the preservation of its grounds

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The understanding of the garden, its intrinsic fragility and ever-changing nature, is at the heart of this thesis. The aim is to gain a deep knowledge of the garden by identifying its elements, the physical and material composition of its constituents - together with their current condition - and the characteristics of its arboreal ornaments.

The investigation develops in several directions: bibliographical and iconographical research to aid the understanding of the original project, and a more direct observation of the ornaments, the vegetation, the irrigation system, and the present state of preservation. The first part of the thesis includes gathering historical knowledge of gardens between the 19th and the 20th century. The scope is to establish how much the garden is the fruit of the influence of previous styles and how much of the genius of one person.



Fig 1: View of the garden in a photograph of that period;

One such person is the famous clown Grock himself, who exerted enormous influence on the conception of the villa and grounds. His many trips, in particular, required careful consideration to identify the possible influence they had on the creation of the project. Of similar importance is the relationship of the garden with its surroundings: the historical analysis of Oneglia and, in particular, of the Cascine - the location in Imperia where the villa is situated - aims to capture this relationship.

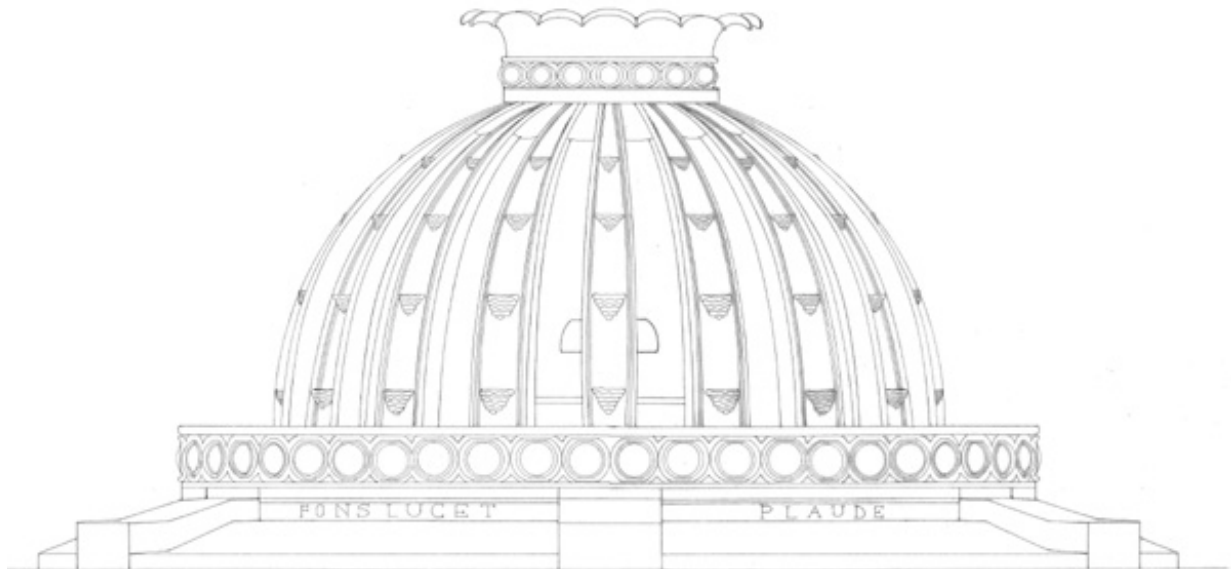


Fig 2: Cross-section of the grounds;

This part of the study develops along a series of thematic lines based on the comprehension of the complex as a whole and the complexity of its constituents (architectural ornaments, decorations and botanical elements). This aims to study the state of preservation and the interactions between the various materials. To this context belongs the study of details of the decorations, keeping in consideration that the garden may assume an expression of deep, magical, religious, mythological and symbolical meaning.

The second part of this thesis concerns the project of restoration and it puts forward proposals for preserving the value of the garden. This is achieved considering that, according to the "Carta Italiana dei Giardini Storici" (Map of Italian historical gardens), the Villa Grock's garden is defined as "un insieme polimaterico, progettato dall'uomo, realizzato in parte determinante con materiale vivente, che insiste su (e modifica) un territorio antropico, un contesto naturale. Esso, in quanto artefatto materiale, e' un'opera d'arte e come tale, bene culturale, risorsa architettonica e ambientale, patrimonio dell'intera collettività" (a complex of many materials, designed by man, realised in a determining way with living material and which lies in (and modifies) an anthropic land, in a natural context. This, as a material artefact, is a work of art and as such a cultural good, architectural and environmental resource, a patrimony of the entire society).

The entire project of restoration must assume a relevant function: in this case the analysis is conducted with the assumption that the Villa may become site of a museum of the clown Grock and circus arts, and the garden for artistic, scientific and cultural exhibitions.



*Fig 3: drawing of one of the three fountains of the garden:
"Fonte della luce" (Fountain of light).*

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