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## “Making” landscape

This issue of *anthos*, the first one to be dedicated to Ticino, is intended to become a reflection on, an interpretation of human steps in the landscape. The landscape is an expression of our society, it is the place in which Man intervenes, where the disciplines of feeling, reading, understanding, giving, discovering, transforming take place and become a task. It is the activity which transforms our landscape and which makes us more sensitive towards our open space and our environment; the activity which is intended to give it a meaning: the development of the planning drawing our future; the architecture which assesses anew; reading from an ecological aspect; Man's coming closer to the values of the landscape; arousing attention for the lost ability to feel and to be surprised; the discovery of an artistic relationship to nature.

Nowadays, a certain nostalgia accompanies our activity. Perhaps it is the lack of values which used to be virtually a matter of course and which are now being rediscovered and reinterpreted using present-day language.

Luis Barragan spoke about this using simple words:

“I believe in an emotional architecture. It is very important for the human species that architecture is moving because of its beauty; if there are various, technically evenly matched solutions for a problem, the one bringing the inhabitant a message of beauty and emotion, is architecture.”

A message which should not be restricted to architecture alone.

Paolo Bürgi

*With this issue of anthos we are bringing our series on the landscapes and gardens of special Swiss regions (1/91 “Lake Lucerne”, 2/91 “Paysage romand”) to a close for the moment.*

*We should like to express our thanks to the Ticinese landscape architects, in particular Paolo Bürgi from Camorino, who compiled this Ticino issue.*

*In order to emphasise the importance of the original language and special character of this issue, we are also bringing the texts in Italian. However, as we should like to make our Ticinese colleagues' articles available to all our readers, we are not dropping any of the usual three anthos languages and also have the English texts in full on the following pages.*

## Lost landscapes

Dr. med. FMH Graziano Martignoni, psychiatrist and psychotherapist, lecturer at the University of Pavia/Varese, president of the Fondazione Uomo-Natura (Man-Nature Foundation)

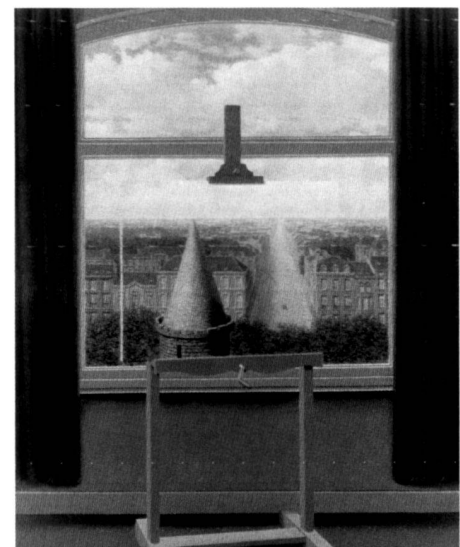
**“J’ai bâti une maison au milieu de l’Océan / Ses fenêtres sont les fleuves qui s’écoulent de mes yeux / Des poulpes grouillent partout où se tiennent les murailles / Entendez battre leur triple cœur et leur bec cogner aux vitres...”**

**(Apollinaire, “Océan de Terre”, 1915)**

In an age in which Nature has revealed her secrets to Man to a large extent, and is almost completely dominated by him; in an age in which progress is at risk of destroying itself through the extreme imbalance which it is creating between the natural and the artificial; in an age in which the differences between natural landscape and one created by humans are no longer perceptible, because there are no longer any “intervals” and the transitions in space and sound are virtually no longer recognisable; in an age in which not only the “heavens”, but also the forests have forgotten their old “spirits” and magic goblins: What has become of the “landscapes” of the marvellous? That “marvellous” which, in less than a century, has taken on a new appearance. The portrayal of landscape formed by the dream of “plein air” – as a contrast to the picture of the city which was felt to be the “heart of darkness”, as an exciting, but at the same time corrupting place of the modern age, as in the case of Daumier, Corot, Courbet and the first impressionists – stands in contrast to the predominance of the “large city landscape”<sup>3</sup> of the twentieth century. Where are the “landscapes” filled with our astonished look, in which a “rhythm” is perceptible, an “interval” which gave the light of dawn and the shadows of dusk a meaning – oscillations of the soul and the eye which could get lost in endless expanse, to then come to rest again on familiar “horizons”, as in the echos of a harmony on the trail of our longing? Where are the “landscapes” today to which one can return, as to the “puit de mon enfance” described by Edmond Jabès? The “landscapes of distance” which inspire thoughts, and more still, which make that “therapy of memories” possible which has always been sung of by poets and lovers... The “landscapes of expectation”, whose apparently empty background we scan anxiously for the far distant, perhaps just imagined figure we await with longing... And finally, the “landscapes of adventure” which allowed a “roving about” in beloved and enticing spirals of the seduction of “somewhere else”... What is left of all this in an age in which the “landscape of the marvellous” is lost in the realm of the artificial, the apparent, the unceasing repetitions of the eternally “same” belonging to the “large city landscape” which is ruled by its

rapidity (P. Virilio), by the myths of absolute productivity, by the abolition of time and space, day and night, here and there (through the constant functioning of a large city, which knows no rest, in all sectors...) by its ephemeral fickleness, its banalities, ecstasies<sup>4</sup> and visual hallucinations which are offered as a substitute for a blotted out memory?... A possible “landscape of the marvellous” should not be confused with the comforting idea of a harmonious, unspoiled piece of nature, a kind of paradise lost; it is not the choice between “natural” and “artificial”, between “tamed” and “wild” which is important, but the recognition that such a landscape has its origin precisely in contradiction, that it lives from the vacillation between opposites within space and time of a “refund” interval. How is it still possible to “lose” oneself in those landscapes which no longer have any “islands” and where the concept of “somewhere else”, with its “eeriness”, as the “landscape of the marvellous” depicted it, only continues to exist tamed, because its presence right into the home has an unbearable and threatening effect? What are the ways and objectives of a “roving about” in urban landscapes for humans in this late modern period who are pulled to and fro between the everyday experience of being hemmed in and the fear of becoming lost and finally foundering?... Of all the possible existences and modern ways of experiencing the world, which seem to order away a fundamental “vigilance” – caused by the absolute directness of the “present”, by which postmodern man is “consumed”, vacillating in his despairful clinging-on to the inflexibility and the repetitive copying of the already familiar and artificial – it is the figures of the “lost landscape” and their representatives (the domain of the “objects” about which Baudrillard speaks<sup>5</sup>) which become possible new scenarios for life, from which the transformation of this twilight of the modern age is to be read.

The landscape appears to have been devoured by reality and spat out again as a consumer good, that is why it looks so lost. The journey can at the most lose itself in trite distractions, or in the tamed illusion of the modern tourist journey, and



the landscapes which were once “admirable deserts” become the “ravaged deserts”<sup>6</sup> of our large cities, enclosed in anonymity, implosion and constrictedness... Thus even the places of “somewhere else”, which it pays to reach – perhaps dreaming – are being lost. Landscapes, about which to write and relate, to make a path through and to track a world of adventure and astonishment<sup>7</sup>.

But what stories and tales will remain to nurture our wanderlust, after a great event has pushed into our landscape... the event about which we are talking here is notable for the fact there is no longer any event. The marvellous has been lost, indeed, I would say it was banned into the enticements of the unending reproducibility of goods and the fluorescing of pictures. It is the loss of the event on which experience is based, with its colours, its smells, its sounds and the feeling of moving towards something which marks the loss of the landscape and the loss of the landscape leads to the loneliness of all those still looking in...

What still remains of the landscapes which were once able to sing and tell of unending stories?

“...indigo, for example. Indigo had the sound of an oboe, sometimes of a clarinet, on the happiest days... He looked at the rows of poplars jutting out of the blanket of fog, like the pipes of an organ...”<sup>8</sup>

Is it not perhaps precisely this “link with the soul”, about which the “landscape of the marvellous” was worried, from which it drew its symbolic strength and its ability to create a shock effect, like the abrupt transition from street and “passages” in Paris, as described by the sharp observer of the nineteenth century, Walter Benjamin; and also from which it derived its ability to amalgamate voice and expression when experiencing the tale, and the ability, to unify the perpetuity and transitoriness of life in it... The quasi completion of the age of “technology”, the subjugation of nature, the baring, the obvious breaking of the spell of this place of looking and recollection, which always means “original landscape” and “landscape of origin” for man; what still remains of this old “magic”?

A magic which carries the inexhaustible meaning of the “mysterious” in it, that is not just a playground for the fantasy of an unspoiled irrationality or naivety which is to be left to poets and children, but also an unmistakable sign of the presence of an “otherness” which is based on a different rationality. The “otherness”, the “mysterious” which speaks to nocturnal rationality, as Gilbert Durant called it, where the inner voices find their way to language and narration, and where the “inner landscape” can come into being<sup>9</sup>.

Thus how can one withstand a confusion in which modern man is running the risk of finally foundering? A question which can only have ethical answer. What meaning is to be given to a landscape to be rediscovered; (...)?

## More green in cities

Benedetto Antonini, architect,  
Head of the Urban Planning Section of  
the Department of the Environment,  
Bellinzona

**The public authorities entrusted with urban planning tasks and “Greenery professionals” should once again revive a culture of urban greenery and pleasure in gardens as a matter of urgency.**

### Is “town” an opposite to “green”?

The errors made by urban planning in modern times – the result of the vain attempt at adapting the city to suit motor traffic – form the basis, in my opinion, for the widely spread, almost common-place idea according to which towns have become “cement and asphalt jungles”. One might ask oneself whether the world of plants and the town are not really irreconcilable opposites. And yet, towns and cities with abundant and intelligent planting of greenery are not rare. It is therefore worthwhile to think about the origin of the usual idea which equates the absence of “green” with the low quality of life in towns.

One first cause might be the fact that at the very bottom of the human soul, the idea of “town” is linked with the concept of medieval towns and cities which, encircled by walls, represent a formal contrast to the green countryside outside.

It may well be that the public open space of medieval towns and cities was to a large degree an open space marked by mineral elements – walls and paving, in which a tree was often a symbol-laden and thus passing phenomenon. But the private sector is a luxuriant vegetable or ornamental garden. But precisely because they are private, these green spaces remain inaccessible, screened from the gaze of unauthorised persons by high walls, so that at the most, some majestic crowns towering above the walls let one guess at the presence of a garden within. Admittedly, I do not believe that the archaic view of the town leads to a negative connotation of this.

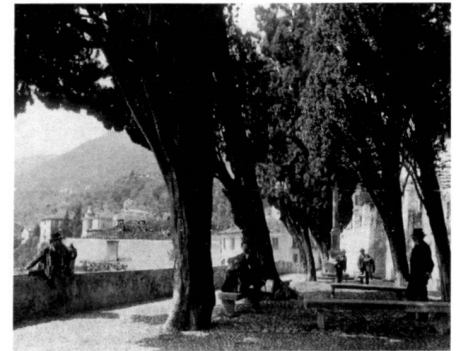
The carefully thought out Renaissance city or the inviting Baroque city lead just as little to such an image, with both of them, each in their own way, having raised the public open space with greenery – be it a street square or park – to a compositional topic. And finally, not even the modern city can be placed in the dock, as it has raised greenery in the city to a principle of composition, at least in its theoretical form, oriented towards social-hygienic principles.

Therefore, I believe that the reasons should first be sought in the planless industrial slums of the nineteenth century, which were constructed solely in accordance with the criterion of maximum profit, in order to be able to concentrate working-class families, whose sole dubious right was to slave away from early morning to late in the evening. Under such con-

ditions, there was no room for trees, at the most for a window-sill here and there with a dusty flower pot. But the whole town did not consist of working-class districts; they were indeed the exception.

Thanks to the process of the dawning of consciousness among the trades unions and also the employers, the model of the working-class areas later improved, and from towards the end of the last century until the Second World War, excellent town types and functionally well organised districts were created which, on the one hand, demonstrate in our eyes the whole paternal care of understanding employers, but on the other hand are witness to a quality of life which is still thought highly of even today.

The pattern is clear: Opposite the cathedral-like factory are the residential areas with their houses and front gardens. In addition there are avenues and public zones which are planted with greenery, such as, for example, the forecourts of schools or hospitals. And then, a little to one side, in a fashionable location, the



entrepreneur’s residence, surrounded by a large park with majestic trees, often even of exotic origin. In its formal layout, the industrial city must thus also be acquitted.

### Greenery in cities: a victim of the postwar period

The only accused remaining is thus the modern city of the postwar period.

Even if not only a critical verdict can be passed, the reasons for the town’s bad reputation with respect to fauna must be sought in its recent history. The first crime was committed directly after the war, when the requirements of reconstruction led to feverish building activity which was marked mainly by quantitative criteria.

A large part of the population was homeless and, in addition, many made their way from the countryside into the town on the search for employment. Residential accommodation had to be created for all of these without delay, so that green zones were often sacrificed and only seldom restored again.

A little later, the phenomenon of urbanisation led to speculative building which quite certainly did not promote investment in values which cannot be directly converted into money, and neglected works for the creation of vital and inviting open spaces.

At the same time, private car ownership developed into a mass phenomenon of enormous extent. The need to adapt

towns and cities to the growing needs of individual mobility became political topic number one. The rows of trees lining avenues made way for additional traffic lanes and areas of lawn and to give place to parking spaces, firstly above ground, then underground. Even in the private sector, hedges and gardens made way for car parking areas and garages.

This all took place to the detriment of the achievements of earlier urban models which had the provision of greenery in a town, especially in publicly used areas, as a motive for collective pride.

In Ticino, a large part of political energy was dedicated to the process of adapting towns and cities to suit private cars, either in the form of time or in the form of money – and only seldom were measures adopted to replace vanished greenery, although some utilisation plans actually envisaged this. Apart from individual trees which have been planted along narrow pavements, not one single new park worthy of the name has been created in the postwar period.

Only very recently have a couple of private gardens been bought up by public authorities. It might be pointed out with justification that this argument only applies to areas which belong to the city according to traditional opinion, but that since the seventies in the new residential areas and surrounding suburban towns in the agglomeration, the ratio of greenery has considerably increased. This is only true, admittedly, in a quantitative respect, is limited to the private area and is a result of the fact that the single-family house with garden is preferred among the various types of building, with the gardens becoming smaller and narrower as a result of the rocketing land prices.

For the most part, these green zones tend to give expression to the wish not to have to communicate with the neighbour than that they could be presented as a real garden culture.

Often the so-called garden is nothing more than the planting of greenery in the open spaces left between the parking spaces for numerous cars and a pathetic swimming pool; the choice of tree types tends to depend on chance or is influenced by the illustration in periodicals for the nouveaux riches, rather than being made on the basis of botanical knowledge or out of any love of nature.

### Hope for the future

In view of this poor net result, is there any reason for hope?

Subject to the prerequisite that the devastation of what still dates from the time before the car comes to an end and a cultural re-thinking which is taking place, I am personally convinced that the need for public and private greenery will once again be raised to a social and political value.

In this sense, a change of trend is already perceptible, at least as far as the rights of car drivers in towns and cities are concerned. Despite considerable conservative resistance, the councils in the suburbs of Ticinese towns and cities seem to

be prepared to take a decisive step towards a change in transport policy.

If the town is freed of private car traffic and public transport has the necessary space available, the reconquering of open spaces for pedestrians will be necessary. However, this reconquering would have to be made in accordance with a comprehensive plan for public zones which will allow a coherent overall result to be kept in mind even in the case of implementation in stages.

If, on the other hand, further private green open spaces have to be sacrificed in favour of a sensible policy of increasing the density of the built-up areas, care should be taken to replace them by significant collective or public recreation areas and thus relaunch the desire to invest in parks and green open spaces.

This is a great challenge for all public authorities involved in planning activities. It depends on their will and far-sightedness whether the quality of living will be taken more into account when preparing the second generation of utilisation plans. But it is also a challenge to all "Greenery professionals" to show a new professionalism and to display increased commitment in order to revitalise the culture of green and pleasure in gardens.



### Nature in the countryside

Dott. Guido Cotti, Cantonal Natural History Museum, Lugano

**Since the Regional Planning Law has placed nature conservation on the same plane as other land uses (agricultural and construction), the problem of nature in the countryside appears in a new guise.**

#### The natural countryside

The present-day Ticinese countryside is the result of human influence on the original landscape over thousands of years and nature's reaction to these interventions. Therefore, it is not only of particular importance for the scientific understanding of our landscape and its history to study and retain the valuable traces of the original landscape which are still preserved in our canton. The great success enjoyed by the first volume of our "Introduzione al paesaggio naturale del Cantone Ticino" (Introduction to the natural landscape of the Canton of Ticino) shows that this has also been understood by large sections of the general public.

When Man first appeared in Ticino five to six thousand years ago, the area was covered by dense unbroken forests. It was a very young landscape, still undergoing transformation. The flora and fauna were just beginning to reconquer the areas devastated by the glaciation of the ice ages. Man thus interfered in a natural process which was still in full progress at that



time, and which still continues to a certain extent even today. Witnesses to this original landscape are, for example, the peat bogs which, thanks to the fossil pollen they preserve, are veritable archives of the history of our fauna since the last Ice Age, and provide a habitat for many species from epochs long past. Seventeen peat bogs in the Canton of Ticino are listed in the "Federal Inventory of high moors and transitional moors of national importance".

Caves and some mountain zones also count as part of the original areas. Also included are regions in which the effect of natural factors is still markedly greater than the human influence. The gravel bed of the Maggia may also be included in part among these, where the water causes far-reaching displacements, thus renewing the ecological structure again and again. As the most recent hydrological studies have shown, the countryside is still being constantly "created" in accordance with the laws of nature.

These rare natural areas must remain intact and be protected in the form of *nature reserves*, as is in fact prescribed by Federal legislation. Such reserves teach us how much is required to combat the numerous ecological problems of the modern environment.

#### The natural components of the landscape

Man's first intervention in the natural landscape was the progressive clearing of the forests, there where villages, fields and pastures were planned. Technical and demographic factors set limits to urbanisation, so that it only progressed slowly, thus allowing nature to adapt gradually to the changes; the cleared zones were quickly repopulated by new animal and plant communities, leading to an ecological enrichment, particularly with respect to the variety of habitats and species which, according to some experts, reached its climax about two hundred years ago.

Important evidence of this state has been preserved in areas with traditional agriculture, where the rich structuring (drystone walls, hedges, ditches, etc.) is linked with a wealth of species, some of which have become rare in the meantime or are even at a risk of becoming extinct.

One special case is that of the dry, rough meadows which have almost always been created by mowing or extensive grazing, and which represent biotopes particularly rich in species (in Negrentino up to 50 different species of plants per square metre!), and where rare species of plants re-

stricted to this habitat grow. The areas with traditional agriculture should thus be protected on account of all these biotopes and protected species also from a scientific aspect. But to protect in this case also means to cultivate correctly. However, it is unfortunately a well-known fact that these areas are being adapted for purposes of intensive utilisation of mechanical cultivation or, even more frequently, are neglected because they no longer bring any yield. It is therefore important, and the law makes express provision for this, to give incentives, also of a financial kind, which will induce landholders to mow the meadows and to care for the drystone walls and hedges.

These agricultural zones form, of course, just a small part of the landscapes which are mainly shaped by nature. Another important example are the numerous forests. In fact the forest in Ticino has clearly preserved more valuable national traits than in the remainder of Switzerland. Here too, attitudes are changing and the most recent cantonal forest programme clearly advises a cultivation of the forest more in keeping with nature. Under such conditions, the retention of natural elements requires the creation of *protected zones*, thus of areas in which any intervention in the landscape may only be made subject to the very strictest observation of these elements.

Thanks to its special biogeographical position, its climate, its topography and its settlement history, the Ticinese landscape is very rich in unusual natural elements which are of great significance on a national, sometimes even on an international plane. It is therefore not surprising that the cantonal outline plan envisages the creation of numerous protected zones.

### Natural elements in the countryside

The zones which could be made protected nature conservancy zones in Ticino are, admittedly, too small and lie too far apart to guarantee the preservation of the flora and fauna in the long term, as stipulated by the Federal law.

Therefore, this law provides for the inclusion of natural zones, in particular hedges or other vegetation, in "intensively used zones inside and outside residential areas", not least in order to restore a minimum ecological balance, which we lack more and more every day, to the areas most changed by Man.

By the way, the cantonal guideline plan also follows the objective of restoring the balance between natural elements and those created by Man which has shifted to Nature's disadvantage. A two-fold objective is being pursued here. On the one hand, the nature conservancy areas are to be linked to one another in order that the species will have the opportunity of passing from one area to the next. On the other hand, an attempt is being made to create biotopes within built-up areas which are intended to have a positive ecological influence on the surroundings. The Federal Law on the Preservation of Nature and the Natural Habitat thus clearly stipulates the "creation" of a new, natural landscape.

In this connection, the thorough scientific registration of the local authority's territory, as has been required for some time for the production of landscape plans as the basis for the utilisation plans, is important. In fact, natural elements possibly still in existence can be best registered at a local level and appropriate solutions found for the restoration of the ecological balance.



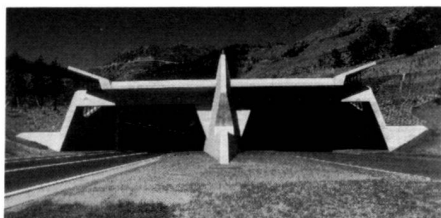
### Rino Tami and the motorway

Prof. Flora Ruchat, architect, Zurich

**"Motorways may become the monuments of the future, places intended for the people's great festivals, where the open space, the light, the movements and the contacts with things can be perceived" (D. Scott Brown).**

Today I went through the Via dei Coronari; I don't know where, I don't know exactly when, but some time in the thirties, Rino Tami lived in this street in Rome. I thought about this and recalled how later – when he was already an architect of renown and was teaching for a short period at Zurich Technical College – he used to tell us about the places of architecture. And how he used to explain the confused construction of Rome, where the episodes of history are piled up on top of one another, and are often present simultaneously in one and the same building, sometimes even in just one wall. He made it clear how the city and its surroundings are shaped by the light and materials rather than individual buildings, or by the original, permanent and powerful forms, determined by the topography, vessels or recollection, old and new: lines, streets, walls, aqueducts, gateways, stairways, rows of trees... monuments. They interweave relations, delimit open spaces, designate transitions...

I believe that these are the elements of both the urban and non-urban landscape, which do not only satisfy Man's basic need to be able to also recognise himself elsewhere, but which also correspond with an aesthetic wish to form this landscape, to give it order, harmony and an appearance recognisable wherever Man can perceive landscape. And precisely these elements occur again in the undoubtedly modern context of the topic of motorway, to which Tami made a masterly contribution from 1965 until the present, thus once again enhancing a role



which had been marginalised by a technological ideology. Even if, with evocative licence, he went directly from the ancient Roman structures to the motorway, there are innumerable structures bearing witness to the dialogue between nature and architecture through the centuries. A dialogue which continues, even if the buildings have long since lost their original function, because they were built in a manner which allowed them to age and to change in dignity, without losing their basic characteristics ("une belle architecture, c'est ce qui fait une belle ruine" – a fine architecture is one which makes a fine ruin – G. Perret observed). The architect, who had previously been solely responsible for the planning of structures, found himself faced by the representative of a new vocation from the mid-eighteenth century on, one who often pushed him to one side: the engineer.

In fact the separation of engineering technology and architecture was sealed with the establishment of the "Ecole des ponts et chaussées". Thus was laid the foundation stone of that division of competence which is often not balanced, so that there frequently appears to be an unbridgeable gap between technology and art. When Otto Wagner planned the massive structures of the urban railway in Vienna towards the end of the last century, he wrote: "The realism of our age must permeate the work of art. It will not harm it, decadence will not be the result. On the contrary, it will pour new life into this mould, and in the course of time conquer new fields from which art is excluded today."

With these thoughts and with references to the first industrial structures, the bridges, the embankments, his stations and his portals, Wagner emphasises the endeavour to allow technical requirement to amalgamate with aesthetic function.

Even when transferred to the present, the quotation still retains its validity, leading us back to that need to control the form at all levels of architecture to which Tami referred in his writings several times, demonstrating that it is indeed possible with the Chiasso–Airolo stretch of the motorway.

The quality of the design, which takes account of the topography, function and economy, and the uniformity of the material lead to a dialogue of recurrent geometries, corresponding exactly to the organic unity of the natural landscape, they form and reinterpret, almost spontaneously, in a process which one might call painless. Retaining walls, bridgeheads and parking areas stipulate spatial sequences which are perceived by both the motorway user and any external observer as structuring elements arising from a particular function.

And this is particularly evident in the case of the tunnel portals: spread wings, projecting horizontally to the opening, as at the Gotthard; in Melide dividing walls, angled parallel to the ridge, the massive keystone which is at the same time the air intake for the ventilation plant; at Ceneri simple elliptical sections at the beginning

and end respectively of the tunnel tube leading out into the light or away from the light. The thematic hierarchy of our age, as it adapts from case to case anew to the surroundings, recalling it, is unique. Each portal, each wall is different. And yet this uniqueness is repetition, precisely because it reflects orographic and recurring functional features.

The detail, arising from a clearly defined idea, becomes standard, vocabulary, model and joins together the uniqueness of the individual episodes to a uniform whole.

With respect to the architect's participation in the motorway construction, it must be said that he played his role skilfully and with determination, but that the implementation would not have been possible without the indispensable convergence of politics and culture in which the then member of the executive council, Franco Zorzi, had an important role as intermediary.

Thanks to this example and the call by Tami himself that "everything which alters the existing spatial relations" belongs to architecture's field of competence, the political and technical authorities in our country appear to have been aroused to a greater degree nowadays. This is also confirmed by the competitions staged in various cantons for "aesthetic consultancy" during motorway construction, for embankments, bridges and viaducts.

It is correct that architecture requires more on this plane if it is considered as decoration. Like all other structures, the highway comes into being with choice of route which will be the main feature of the new morphology of the terrain.

And there, at the origin of the things, architecture demands its legitimate place and its cultural task within the complex division of competences; this too a suggestion by Tami.

## Revaluing a park: Casvegno-Mendrisio psychiatric clinic

Renato Cometta, cantonal architect,  
Bellinzona

**In our days, the need for surroundings offering recreation and refreshment is greater than ever. The creativity, the search for the best possible balance between Man and Nature, and growing mental willingness to be receptive for new ideas have led to the proposal to transform the parks of a psychiatric clinic into a meeting place for the community as a whole.**

The reason which has induced me, this time, to present not a landscape architecture project in the true and proper sense, but simply its intentions as accomplished in collaboration with the neuropsychiatric clinic, which is looking more and more for

a dialogue at various levels with its surroundings.

### Casvegno Park

The hospital complex contains a natural heritage known only to a few and which even fewer had the opportunity of appreciating. Casvegno estate – a sort of green lung for Mendrisio – is 33 hectares in size. A hill naturally separates the village school centre from the neuropsychiatric clinic. Casvegno is an open village which endeavours to rid itself of the infamous connotations of "madhouse" and is nurtured by the human warmth of rehabilitation which is marked by scarcely constricting geographical conditions. Even if only reservedly, Casvegno extends its feelers to the human beings in its vicinity. As already mentioned, only few know this green zone, although it lies just a stone's throw away from the centre of Mendrisio, is of enviable size and unique in its type.

### The intentions

The park is to be redesigned and opened to a population which has not had the opportunity up to now to really enjoy it. It is an attempt, by means of nature, to knock down barriers which are more psychological than real, thus offering all the opportunity of enjoying a beautiful and valuable piece of landscape.

Behind this lies the wish for an opening to life, for the benefit of the people living here, but also for the benefit of all the inhabitants. Opening means dipping into the peace of a small natural paradise, a peace which cannot be conditioned from outside.

### The project

The structures of the park are to be thoroughly revised. Diseased and dying plants must be radically removed and replaced by new forms of life, creating points of attraction for children, athletes and nature lovers.

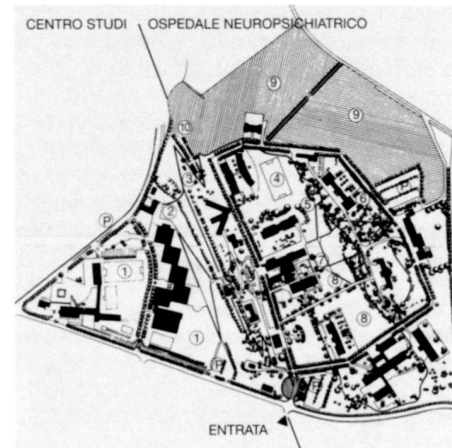
The intention is also to completely rethink the relationship with the nearby school buildings, separated physically from the hospital complex by a small hill: the motor saws must not be braked by alarmist emotions, because the substance of the park is to remain untouched, indeed is to be invigorated by "fresh cells".

*The spade which one uses for planting is necessary, but the axe is also indispensable for the design of park and garden landscape.*

Hermann Fürst von Pückler-Muskau

The proposal is to provide a 1800 m long, tree-lined pedestrian circular walk round the park perimeter, the circular form of which will be further emphasised by planting Lombardy poplars and pyramid-shaped oaks. A new access will thus be provided, doing justice to the extent of the park. Further planned are a soccer pitch, a running track, a vita parcours, minigolf, a Robinson playground, a recreational and picnic area, as well as areas for entertainment and events. But that is not all.

In order to revalue the park, cylinders, false perspectives, copses, gradation of natural colours, plants and perfumed



flowers, a labyrinth and an arbor vitae are created by systematic planting, always guided by the principle of preserving and revaluing the plant heritage. In brief, a tree landscape is to be created allowing a varied utilisation of the park.

In other words, Casvegno Park is to lose its corners in favour of a desirable "embracing" of visitors and residents. As a pedestrian precinct, of course, after the beneficial ban on four-wheeled vehicles led to a gradual removal of the asphalt pathways in the park, witnesses to the ecological illiteracy of earlier times.

For space reasons, the project can only be presented in simplified form in broad outlines here.

### The implementation

Work has already begun in stages. There has also been the idea of involving the school children from Mendrisio and neighbouring communities (there were 260 in 1990) in a "Sapling Day", offering them the opportunity of making a manual contribution to the restoration of the park. For a whole day they are to have the possibility of getting to know the park from within, in the course of which practical work and information, discovery and findings are to alternate. In this manner, access to an asset is to be made easy for them which the population of the area is slowly discovering again. At the same time, however, the understanding and appreciation of tomorrow's adults is also to be awakened. They will be able to say with pride that they contributed something towards the redesign of the park.

### The expectations

Casvegno Park is intended to become a place of encounter, where those from the surrounding area seeking recreation and the residents of Casvegno (who it is hoped will only be here for a temporary stay) will be able to reach out their hands to one another.

No entrance fee will be charged, because the park belongs to everyone. But one would like to stimulate the visitors to make a moral contribution, by cultivating contacts with the residents and to all those who consider such a place of encounter worthy of imitation.

## Path by the lake

Commune of Vira Gambarogno

Paolo Bürgi,  
landscape architect HTL/BSLA/OTIA

### **A project for a new lakeside path taking account of the environment, the landscape and the historical guidelines for such places.**

At the beginning of this century, the use of our lake shores changed: places for fishermen, who used to push their boats out on windless days, have become points of attraction for people seeking recreation. In this period, at the beginning of the development of tourism, work began on re-modelling the profiles of the lakeshore in an urban manner.

This project picks up at the type of intervention of the beginning of the century, admittedly expressed in today's language, referring to the area's morphological and urban characteristics.

#### **The concept**

By means of the path, the proposal seeks to link up the centre, the more recent building schemes and the estuary plain, and put it into relationship with the surrounding landscape: a parallel movement along the compact structure of the centre, a curved avenue past the zone with more modern buildings, a finale in the wooded nature of the delta.

#### **The path**

The pathway begins in the east at the small boat harbour and leads on parallel to that paved with gneiss blocks along the walls and houses of the old town, creating a reference to the shore with a clear urban design.

The division between the centre and the more recent built-up areas is made by the row of trees and change in paving (gravel instead of blocks). Here the path develops into a curved line, following the soft morphology of the zone behind, ending at the delta with a geometric design, in dialogue with the natural landscape with the view opening out onto the lake. This finale manifests itself by means of intentional linearity which is contrasted with the natural softness of the delta. A place of calm or for public events is thus created, inviting one to continue one's walk (attraction of the view/relation to the view).

The footpath by the lake is linked to the lanes of the village centre and access areas have been proposed for outside the dwelling houses: open spaces, points of reference, places of rest, access points and contacts with the natural lake shore.

#### **The height of the path, the wall and the shore**

According to the hydrological records of the Canton of Ticino, the lake levels fluctuate by over five metres. The proposed elevation of 195.5 m (641 ft) above sea level is attained every three years on average. However, it offers an optimum refer-

ence to the shore and the buildings lying behind. The wall constructed thus has an average height of approximately 150 cm. It limits the intervention, by allowing the shore to be kept free of installations and interference, and leaving a beach along the lakeside esplanade, separated from passers-by. This wall has been proposed as a natural stone, fair-faced masonry structure using massive coping blocks, while the access elements to the shore are formed by horizontally ribbed concrete walls.

#### **The planting**

The row of trees element is formed by black poplars (*Populus nigra* 'Italicus') which are typical for the plains and the shore landscapes. On the one hand, this tree allows the view from the more recent residential areas to the lake to be kept open (looking through = greater effect of depth), while on the other hand the walker's look is directed towards the landscape of the lake on account of the effect of perspective. Three points in this row are marked by horse chestnut trees which stand out in shape and colour between the poplars, emphasising the points of access to the lake.

#### **Some special features of the project**

Various design stages have created this proposal which is based on the zoning plane of the Commune of Vira Gambarogno from 1985.

Among other things, the following should be mentioned: the proposal to restore the church wall using natural stones; this impressive structure, with a view of the 17th century church, is in a precarious state nowadays. Of course the structure's function (support and boundary of the sacred area of the church, the churchyard) is not to be changed, nor degraded by changes to its original use. Such layouts require a careful intervention, full of respect for the atmosphere of such places.

The ship landing stage also requires a re-design, a new structure in accordance with modern criteria for the waiting room. These small buildings for shipping are, as can be observed along our lakes, to be in-



cluded in the area of the landing stage. Standing alone, transparent and light, they make it possible for the traveller to wait sheltered under the roof, while watching the boats moving on the lake.

At the side of this structure is a terrace, as an open-air lounge.

Among the various special features of the project to be noted are: the footbridge over the Lido, a landing stage for guest boats as an additional tourist attraction, the re-design of the parking area and the future extension of the lake esplanade.

## Conclusion

Thanks to the remarkable commitment of the interested parties, this project was prepared taking account of all special features and unusual aspects except for personal interests.

This excellent collaboration was followed by the approval of the departments responsible and the cantonal commission for objects of natural artistic beauty. However, the scheme for the lake esplanade proposed by us was thwarted by the executive authorities.

"One never knows who is right, but one must always know who it pays to admit is right" (Arthur Bloch).

## Castelgrande Park in Bellinzona

Aurelio Galfetti,  
architect BSA, Bellinzona

### **I thought particularly about the open space, and in Bellinzona it seemed to me possible to create a park in which the mineral element would be just as important as the vegetal one.**

The programme for the restoration of the Castelgrande fortress envisaged the implementation of a series of very varied facilities, such as a restaurant, reception room, exhibition rooms, etc., which were to be integrated into the existing structures.

In order to renovate, or as it was put in the programme, revitalise the Castello and the Rocca, an element on an urban scale, essentially public in character, had to be found which would give the whole complex a new significance and a new role.

The park is the new public open space, ordering and updating the existing and, in parallel to that, relativating the importance of the individual intended purposes.

I believe that this new public open space has the potential of bringing together, but also of stimulating the most diverse activities, cultural and others, which could not just revitalise the Castello, but also the town. The construction of the tent for the seventh centenary celebration was the first event which made use of the park as a support or, better, as the open space where the new meets the old. Inventive and novel as it was, it also represented the logical conclusion of a work which does not only seek to conserve the existing, but in particular wants to transform it and bring it up to date.

The park is thus not just a collection of plants, bushes, flowers, etc. adorning the town. It is, above all, a public open space which is structured by a path or a network of paths, and in which the most varied events can be staged.

The pathway which structures Castelgrande Park begins at the Piazza del Sole, leads into the rock and through a "window" into the light of the inner courtyard.

It climbs rapidly, steeply, then splitting up into a series of gentler and longer paths which take the visitor (back) to various points in the town. The lift, one of the most important moments on the path, was regarded as a welcome opportunity and taken as a pretext for creating new open spaces and views of the existing.

The park and the access path already existed beforehand, but were completely redesigned. The basic elements have remained the same, but one sees them from a different perspective. I call this transformation. It is an architectural work which makes things topical, renews existing things by placing them in a "new light" differing from the existing one.

Today, the new appearance of the Castello causes astonishment: Basically speak-



ing, everything was already there, at the most something was taken away. The only thing that was added was a new way of looking at things.

The park, once "romantic", picturesque, remote and inhabited by crows, has become a place where the essence of the various presences evokes the whole history of the crag since the glaciation. The fort Castelgrande nowadays tells, more than ever, that it

is a great rock which withstood the ice which once filled the valley; was an inhabited promontory, isolated like a fortress in the middle of the valley which was a river and marsh; was a defensive structure which dominated the town.

The "Ice Age" rock with the morainic remains which allowed vegetation to grow was "stripped" to become the plinth, the support for a "wonderful garden" (the park) gathered on its summit like the gardens on the rocks of the Via Bavona.

The lookout and defensive promontory has been transformed into a large meadow, partially level, partially sloping. Its precisely bounded area forms an isolated open space, separated from the town, from which the dimension of the natural landscape (sky, mountains and valley) is to be seen.

The defensive elements have become recreational elements. In my opinion, to preserve a fortress is not very sensible; on the other hand, to transform it can mean that life will continue to develop and that its quality can be improved by means of the improvement in the quality of the open space.

Castelgrande Park was in fact constructed from elements which were once used for defence and support. These are

the rock, the walls, the water, the grass and the trees. One of those trees, the wild cherry planted recently, will, for a short, ten days each year, be a white cloud on a black trunk on a grey plinth, 120 feet above the Piazza del Sole.

This is one way to love and appreciate the trees... There were many trees of various species. I had many of them cut down. Because I so love trees that I can still feel them to make those still remaining the real monuments.

When planning the park, I thought little about the flowers and colours, but a great deal about light. When designing the links between the various components, I thought of the light which "forms" the naked cliff, the light which variously "touches" the sloping and level surfaces of the ramparts reflected in the water.

These aspects form the small scale of Castelgrande Park which, however, also has another, larger scale.

On its northern side, the rock has no vegetation, and is thus completely artificial, becoming one of the façades of the Piazza del Sole. It represents the link to this part of the town.

The vineyard to the south, with its precise geometry, forms the extension of the town, which spreads out towards the Castello.

The crag and vineyard are the "supports" of the park. The "body" consists of the large green meadows. The furnishing is the Castello itself. The crag, vineyard and meadows require care. This is obvious in the case of the vines and grass, but less so in the case of the rock.

What does it mean to have stripped a crag? I wanted to make a park which would be as artificial as possible. Artificial in the sense of an architecture which does not become integrated with nature, but opposes it. In this dialectic relationship, I see the only possibility of respecting nature on the one hand and what man has created on the other.

And there is another reason which convinced me to make the park the most important architectural element. The conservative spirit of the past few decades does not allow any room for a real transformation of the interior of the historic structures any more.

Historic town centres are dying for good, thanks to the purely restorative preservation nowadays prevalent. After a brief flash of fictive youth, they agonise for a few decades. Life moves to the outskirts, the so-called suburbs.

Nowadays, the architect has to devote his interest to the following topics: the suburb, and this is a great chance, because the future lies there; the ephemeral, which is also very fine, especially when a level such as that of the tent for the septicentennial celebrations, is achieved; the public open spaces.

The park is one of the most important public open spaces.

I thought of the open space in particular, and in Bellinzona it seemed to me to be possible to create a park where the mineral element is just as important as the vegetal one.

## A tropical garden in Ascona

Heiner Rodel, Massagno, landscape architect BSLA/OTIA

Collaborators:

Nick Righetti, landscape architect HTL  
Sergio Notari, draughtsman

**Romanticism, beauty and "Italianità" were the guidelines stipulated by the sponsor for the design of the surroundings. The word "giardino", meaning garden, bears the idea.**

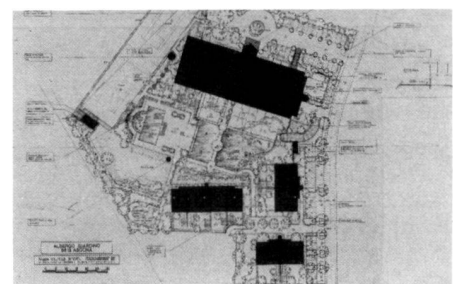
The site is located in the Maggia delta, not far from Ascona. In the south west, the garden borders onto a golf course, and to the south east the grounds are accessible from the Via Segnale. The neighbourhood may be described as an open zone of single-family and apartment houses which may not exceed three storeys in height. It should be pointed out here that the site does not border directly onto the shore of Lago Maggiore, something which proved to be a particular challenge for the project. When one examines the unique location of this site, the viewer will immediately notice the valuable stock of trees on the site itself, as well as in the surrounding sites. In the course of the artistic production and design of this garden, especially this background of outstanding trees creates an ideal framework in which the basic idea of the "giardino" garden was embedded. A decentralised arrangement of the various buildings forms a sheltered courtyard situation with exotic plants, opening on to the swimming-pool garden. A place of calm or also centre-point in this courtyard was created by the provision of a large expanse of water surrounded by various terraces, some directly by the water.

This sheltered courtyard situation offers to follow the principle of the Baroness Saint Léger (foundress of the century-old gardens on the island of Brissago), always to try out which exotic plants can withstand wintering in the open in this climate made moderate by Lago Maggiore.

The main axes in the garden, as well as in the area of the entrance drive, have one of the most famous statues of Aphrodite (copies of the original from the Louvre). These sculptures are presented in niches specially created for the purpose.

All the structures in the garden serving the guest are constructed as tents, beginning with the showers and changing cubicles to the elegant awning in the area of the hotel entrance drive.

The grounds were opened in spring 1986.





## Redesign, restoration and maintenance of a historical garden: "Casa Rusca" park in Cureglia

Niccardo Righetti,  
landscape architect HTL,  
Cademario

### The example of the change in utilisation of the "Casa Rusca" park in Cureglia shows how a historical garden can be saved by a cautious and effective policy of small steps.

#### Short historical survey

The construction of the Palazzo Rusca with adjoining park is attributed to Vitale Rusca (1790–1862), a politician and member of the executive council of the young Republic of Ticino. The building is a typical patrician house of the early nineteenth century. It has several storeys and is arranged on a north-south longitudinal axis. Regrettably, there are no details to be found on the architect and sponsor in the documents at our disposal. However, the dating of the fresco on the outside wall of the building (1823) allows one to draw conclusions on the date of the construction. The park would appear to have been laid out at the same time, and the completion of the works thus lies in about the year 1830.

#### Structure and special feature of the park

Fortunately, the basic structure of the park has been retained, it being based on the well-known model of late Baroque French parks which had been revived from the tradition of the Tuscan garden of the 18th century.

Its main features are the long central axis entrance gatehouse, the narrow paths always arranged at right-angles to this, the surrounding wall with espalier plants and the numerous hedges, in particular those forming a typical "parterre" in front of the main façade of the building. It was only in a second phase that this severe, markedly single axis structure was overgrown by various vegetation elements alien to the original style. Plants are to be found here which were typical for Romantic gardens of the early nineteenth century (copper beeches, Japanese maples, conifers and ericaceae), as well as exotic plants, as were to be found in lakeside gardens in northern Lombardy at the end of the nineteenth century (palms, oleacea, magnolias, camelias, etc.)

The introduction of these atypical plants into the original structure made the park into a layout of a very particular kind, linking elements and characteristics of gardens from various epochs in a highly imaginative manner in a very restricted area. We have no way of knowing whether this came about by chance or whether it is attributable to the inspiration of a skilled gardener. However, it is certain that this special feature significantly increases the

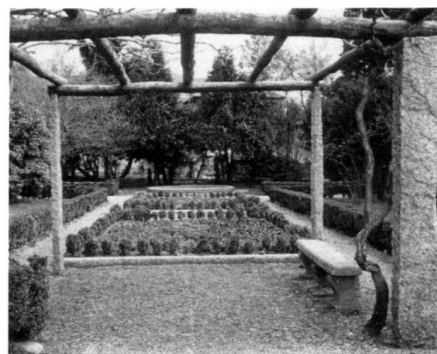
historic-cultural and the artistic value of the palazzo, and of the park in particular.

#### Plan and first interventions

Directly after the purchase of the Rusca site by Cureglia council in 1984, a plan of the buildings and existing vegetation to a scale of 1:200 was prepared. On the basis of this, a catalogue of the most urgent maintenance works to redesign and renovate the park was prepared so that it might be made accessible to the public as soon as possible. In particular, the following operations were listed:

- general cleaning up of the site from all rubbish;
- removal of weeds;
- followed by the removal of dead, diseased and old plants;
- removal of spontaneously grown plants, alien to the structure;
- pruning of the trees in stages;
- pruning and systematising of the hedges;
- pruning and partial restoration of the espalier plants;
- redesign of the lawn areas;
- redesign and maintenance of the movable structures;
- systematisation of the narrow paths and the access drives;
- maintenance and restoration of the greenhouse.

These operations have been spread over four years and allowed the existing struc-



tures and plants to be conserved as well as possible. Some of these operations have not yet been completed and it is proposed to continue then for some years in order thus to achieve the best possible result (in particular with respect to the retention of the numerous yew hedges).

#### The basic plan

After we were commissioned by the council to prepare a basic plan on the design of the "Casa Rusca" park, the search for the priority planning criteria seemed to us to be of the greatest importance. On the one hand, the change in utilisation of the grounds (from a private to a public park) had to be taken into account, on the other hand, we were aware that – as no form of art had suffered such great losses over the years as horticulture, and we were dealing with a historical garden in the sense of the "Carta dei giardini storici" (map of historical gardens), called the "Carta di Firenze" (Florence Map) from 1981 – the historical-artistic reevaluation of the park should be at the centrepoint. The planning is therefore mainly designed

to maintain the historical park. At a few points, changes in the basic structure were, it is true, also required, but they are similar in character and style to the original grounds, or at least compatible with them.

So with the basic plan two different types of operation were carried out: the renovation and the redesign. The main part of the grounds were renovated, because the original concept of the layout could still be recognised there. In these areas, we restricted ourselves to restoring the aesthetic and functional aspects of the individual structures and plantings, in order to make the original concept of the garden recognisable again. For the other areas, i.e. for the unused areas or for those areas whose function had to be changed, as they did not satisfy the requirements set for a public park, a redesign was proposed. This is regarded as the only feasible way for the transformation of a private park into use as a public park.

In the front part of the garden, the creation of a specialities garden was primarily proposed which is to be laid out round the production structures (greenhouses and hotbeds).

#### Timetable and procedure for the operations

After the basic plan had been approved by the local council in 1987, it was jointly decided to implement the renovation of the park in stages.

This was for two simple reasons: On the one hand, the local council wants to spread the costs for the implementation of these works over some years, on the other hand, the objective is to avoid closing the park to the public for a lengthy period.

It is possible to carry out the works in stages as the grounds consist of various parts which can be renovated or redesigned individually.

In spring 1989, the first renovation works were carried out in those areas in the worst state.

At the same time, a children's playground was installed in a remote corner of the park. The renovation works were continued in 1990. A new greenhouse directly next to the old one was planned. This building was completed in the course of last spring.

The works in the park of the "Casa Rusca" will probably be completed at the end of 1995.

## For the best years of your life... Residenza "Villa Sassa", Lugano

Heiner Rodel, Massagno,  
landscape architect BSLA/OTIA

Collaborators: Nick Righetti,  
landscape architect HTL

Sergio Notari, draughtsman

Art in the garden: Ivan Pestalozzi,  
iron sculptor

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**"...on the northern side of the 16120 sqm park site, along which a tripoli avenue leads dead straight diagonally to the corner of the marble palace to the aviary at the viewing point, for the wheelchair parade, so to speak, to the east the foundations of the boccia course rammed into the steep slope, the very finest majolica sand covers the absolutely level course so that the punto ball will not roll out of the bersaglio constellation because of some stupid bit of unevenness..." (from the report by the late Hermann Burger, "Neue Zürcher Zeitung", 26/27 November 1988).**

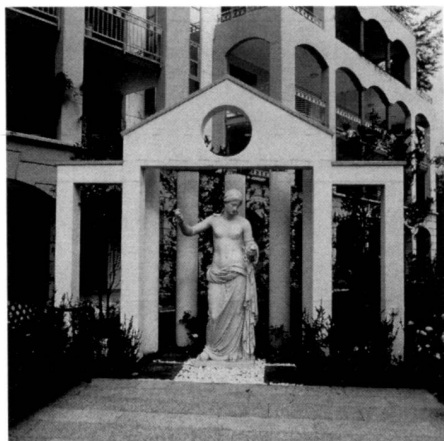
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"For the best years of your life" was the motto which also formed the basis for the design of the garden layout. The complex, consisting of the restored Villa Luvini dating from the turn of the century and the post-modern residence Villa Sassa, is majestically located on the northern slope above the town of Lugano.

Regrettably, it was only possible to save the most important parts of the old park from the massive intervention. The old part of the original park with the outstanding evergreen magnolias facing the town and supported by a castle-like retaining wall, also dating from the turn of the century, remained undisturbed.

An axis links this historical part of the grounds to the post-modern section.

Large parts of the new grounds lie on top of sections of buildings. The angular building form reflects the noise from the town which it has been possible to muffle by a fountain with waterworks, at the same time disguising the ventilation outlets for the buildings located beneath.



A cleft in the landscape is crossed by a footbridge, below which lies a pool which can be seen from the fitness rooms and the swimming pool.

This footbridge makes it possible for the whole of the grounds to be used by handicapped persons without being hindered by steps and ramps. The 70 m long axis begins in the historical part with a gazebo which was found in the original park and ends in the modern part in a pavilion matching the style of the building. In keeping with the high standards set for the grounds, valuable materials were also employed for the surrounding design, namely natural granite blocks for the paving and retaining walls.

The planting concept was adapted to the existing stocks and duly expanded. The guest and resident has a whole range of activities in the open air at his or her disposal, such as boccia, tennis, aviaries and a generously sized greenhouse, etc. Cars are accommodated for the most part out of sight under overgrown pergolas in the south-western part.

### In conclusion

An interesting attempt at linking together two powerful stylistic elements, clearly visible in the architecture, which is also reflected in the garden.



### The love of order

Flavio Paolucci, artist, Biasca

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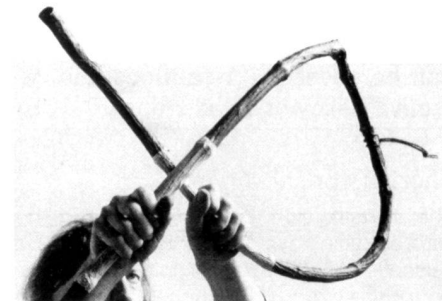
**Creation as a function of life, or better, how that which one might call the "costume" for the search for life is found by means of creative activities.**

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I do not believe that it is possible to deny this relationship between Man and Nature which starts out from the transition from day to night, with life and death, but which is new each time. My need was always to put the emotions, which I had perhaps already had, but had not enjoyed to the full, in question again each time.

As far as my artistic work is concerned, I must add that it is nature itself which offers me the means and the tools with which I can express myself artistically. Not only my art, but my whole life is a constant reference to nature. Admittedly, not in a sense which we might describe as ecological or recreational. It is not beauty and joy – apart from the healthy effect – going out into nature or spending a few hours in a forest, which are the topic. It is rather a matter of putting myself into the surrounding which is most likely to allow me to seek the confrontation and to stand up to it; it is the need to confront what surrounds me and to measure up to it. And as I was born here, in these mountains,

valleys and forests, I deal mainly with these elements. Creation as a function of life, or better, how that which one might call the "costume" for the search for life is found by means of creative activities. I create something very modest, but which is good for me, with wood and paper, the wood of the forests surrounding me, from a profound need to create "objects" using a highly manual method of working which



almost always represent a future already belonging to the past. Creation as a function of internal and external life, but always remaining attached to something, like a tangible thread of human activity.

This maturing in time is the proof of the great pleasure in this work made by my hands. All these things are linked with my innermost life, even if I do not know everything. In my works you will notice a wearing away of the surface, caused by the superimposition of paper and paint, of aged transparencies; inexact and yet perfect, this is the work with one's hand which is the work of Man of today, tomorrow, and also yesterday.

In this sense, Nature has a double role: It gives rise to the question, supports the confrontation, gives the impetus to searching and reflection; in addition, however, it also offers the means which allow me to make the translation or "formal" response, a response which is not expressed in words, but in forms.

