

# Abstracts in English

I.

# The past in the present

## Hidden gardens. The art of visiting a (hidden) garden

Ignacio Somovilla

This chapter is a journey through a career that took its first steps in a “classic” garden, the Evaristo Valle Museum Foundation (Xixón, Asturias). From this starting point, while remaining grounded in classical sources and the canonical history of the garden, I have progressively widened my gaze to take in other places. In the course of history, the garden has been present in all the arts, reflecting in their works the changes that have taken place in the garden and offering a varied range of perspectives from different places: the garden as an artistic creation, a metaphor, a satire, a stage, a space for voicing political, social or individual demands.... The garden as a state of moral being or conflict, the garden as a last stronghold, a haven for private pleasures, or as the quintessential heterotopic place. Gardens can accommodate anything because they are permeable to the world they serve. Even though their walls are high and impenetrable, capturing the gardens’ beauty within them, allowing barely anything to show through to the exterior, they are also transparent and allow us to understand and explain the paradises that we have lost and, from time to time, regained. This is the history of our race; a history of continual attempts to return to our paradise, a garden that is both wonderful and unique. All of the paths that we follow in the garden converge in the same place: the garden as a cultural creation and a reflection of our evolving spirit.

If the mythical beginnings of Western gardening arise from the Genesis of the Bible, a place where there were no buildings and the garden was sufficient in itself to provide shelter, we must perforce ask ourselves what exactly we understand by garden. Examples of historical gardening (Aranjuez, Villa Adriano, Laberinto de Horta, Central Park, etc.) abound that point us toward a common definition, but this unanimity would surely disappear when we expand our gaze to explore the realms of art – such as *land art* – or examples closer to popular art. Could this be considered a garden? It could, if we were to accept definitions such as the one that says that a garden is the cultural manifestation of human creation where nature (or its abstraction) is always present.

A series of personal experiences – curatorship of exhibitions, books on atypical green spaces in Barcelona, coordination of the film and garden series, etc. – have completed and enriched our gaze, contributing new elements of knowledge and appraisal and value.

From a critical stance, we have been able to view with curiosity a series of parks created with the advent of democracy and the years of the new democratic town councils. The Barcelona metropolitan area was full of large recreational estates that were converted into public parks. Unfortunately, the urgent need to endow the towns with green spaces prevented these historic gardens from being preserved as such. Instead, they were transformed into public parks with a series of isolated, decontextualized, jumbled historical elements that shared space with sports facilities, children’s play areas and all sorts of new architectural manifestations, disfiguring and subverting the old gardens and preventing any effective reading under a historical light. Mention is made of a number of examples that support our thesis, such as Can Mercader in Cornellà de Llobregat, Can Vidalet in Esplugues de Llobregat, Ca l’Arnús and Can Solé in Badalona, and Torreblanca in Sant Feliu de Llobregat.

These are not the only examples of “destruction” or disfigurement of gardens; other examples are cited such as the creation of the Museum of the Mediterranean in Torroella de Montgrí (Girona), whose refitting to convert it into a museum meant erasing the small garden at the back of the house. Or when the financial entity, “la Caixa”, demolished the small courtyard garden of the Palau Macaya as part of the building’s refurbishing, or the disappearance of a large part of the gardens of Cap Roig to install different elements such as the stage and bleachers for the homonymous music festival.

Another topic that we find increasingly fascinating is that of the eccentric gardens. What causes people of such diverse origins, education and fortunes, in the four corners of the globe, to share this devotion for an excessive and eccentric creation? Certain common features make it tempting to try to put them in the same box. Even so, originality is always present, breaking with the conventional canons of such elusive concepts as “good taste”, blending, excess, *horror vacui*, a peculiar sense of humour, playfulness, cross-fertilisation between “historical” elements and a wide array of popular cultures, the fact that they are built over a long period of time and are almost never considered finished. Another feature that also seems to unite them is that behind each work, behind each garden, there is always a very special character, someone who does not go unnoticed and for whom we would not find a single, unequivocal adjective to describe them. Their genesis is as varied as the examples we find, and their creations are absolutely original and unrepeatable. Bomarzo, surely, is the father of all the ec-

centric gardens that would come after him, and here we list just a few examples, such as the Palais Ideal of the postman Cheval, in France, Josep Pijuila's huts in Argelaguier, or the Mara Mao created by Pepe Garcia, *Pillimpo*, in Lanzarote.

Lastly, we consider the burning issue of how to incorporate new narratives – gender, LGTBI, slavery and colonialism, etc. – in the histories enclosed within the gardens so that we can navigate a safe passage among the waves created by contemporaneity.

## The perception of the gardens of the Alhambra

José Tito Rojo

This chapter pursues a twofold goal: on one hand, to explore the current perception of the Alhambra as a place where buildings and gardens intertwine to form an inseparable whole, and, on the other hand, to study as a problem the landscape structure of the central core of palaces at the time they were founded.

In the case of the former, we start by saying that in the mid-19th century, the site was practically devoid of any gardens that would enable us to conceive an Alhambra in which gardens played an important role. At that time, only one was preserved from the medieval Islamic period, the Patio de los Arrayanes, and a few fragments added after the Christian conquest. The perception of a gardened Alhambra began to take root with the successive creation of gardened landscapes after its declaration as a National Monument in 1868. First by the director Rafael Contreras, between 1875 and 1880, and then by Leopoldo Torres Balbás, between 1923 and 1936, in interventions that were completed and continued by his successor Francisco Prieto-Moreno.

We also analyse how, in the second half of the 19th century, Orientalism, ignoring the contemporary reality in which gardens were virtually absent, imagined a Nasrid Alhambra in which gardens had a significant presence. This fantasy added further fuel to the popular image of the gardens of the Alhambra, which had also found fertile ground in the actions of the Romantics of the first half of the 19th century, who highlighted the ephemeral garden of the Patio de los Leones, built around 1810, but demolished in 1844. For a long time, this garden was considered an eminent example of Muslim gardening, despite being a 19th-century creation. Indeed, recent studies of the courtyard have given credence to the idea that in the Middle Ages, when the palace was built, it was paved and not a garden.

The second part of the paper studies the remains of garden structures located in the central area

of the Alhambra, the upper and lower Partal Palace, which were excavated successively by Modesto Cendoya and Leopoldo Torres Balbás in the early 20th century. Terraces, retaining walls, ponds and a pavilion emerged during the excavations, which, when added to the preserved large pavilion of the Partal Bajo, certify that this area was endowed with gardens in the early days of the Alhambra. In the 13th century, before the later palaces were built, especially the Palacio de Comares and the Palacio de los Leones, there was the first great palace of the Alhambra, the so-called Partal Alto. Its chronology has been the subject of a series of hypotheses that, as studies have progressed, have gradually pushed its construction further back in time. At first, after its excavation undertaken by Torres Balbás in the 1930s, it was thought to have been built by a sultan from the final period of the Nasrid dynasty, Yusuf III. Then, it was suggested that it could have been the work of the dynasty's second sultan, Muhammad II, and there are even scholars who consider that it could have been built by the first sultan, his father Muhammad I.

Whichever of the two sultans actually built it, its location in the centre of the grounds and the arrangement of long terraces that descend from it to the north wall of the Alhambra provide grounds for proposing an early Alhambra in which the gardens adjoining the palaces had a prominence that today has been masked by the visual strength of the inner gardens, the courtyards, and by the site's current gardens, which date from the 20th century.

The significance of these gardens is heightened by our interpretation of the main buildings of the terraces, especially the so-called Partal Bajo, which recent historiography has interpreted as a palace separated from the rest of the terraces by brick enclosures. The interpretation proposed in this paper is that it was not a palace, but an open garden pavilion, placed at the foot of a pond and forming an axis with another smaller pavilion, two terraces above, surrounded by a U-shaped pond.

In our conclusion, we contrast the evidence from the remains discovered by 20th-century archaeology with the vision of the Romantics and Orientalists, which, ignoring the historical accounts that had been preserved in their time, was based purely on imagination. Paradoxically, this poetic reverie was very close to the perception one gains today, thanks to the excavated remains and the gardens that were later built over them.

Originally, the Alhambra's central core was a palace with extensive gardens. Subsequently, with the dereliction of the fortress and the destruction of some of the buildings, it became an empty site surrounded by market gardens of little aesthetic interest and, finally, it has once again become a place of ornamental gardens. An unusual evolution that has had the good fortune to restore the monument's landscape qualities, lost for many centuries.

## Historical gardens, truth and fiction. Notes on the 20th-century Italian garden: inventions, copies, influences

Simonetta Zanon

*Giardini storici, verità e finzione* (Historical gardens, truth and fiction) is the title of a book and also a conference organised by the Fondazione Benetton Studi Ricerche, the 2019 International Landscape Study Days, devoted to this topic within the context of a renewed interest in the historic garden. To gain an idea of the many important meanings and values enshrined within this subject, one has only to think of its dimensions: botanical, ecological, social, artistic and stewardship. In fact, the subject could provide input for the current public discourse on landscape culture and design, taking into account the inherent link between the historic garden and the broader field of humans' relationship with the other living beings on Earth. But all this is in danger of being overshadowed by other issues that are considered more important and urgent, because they are more immediately and explicitly related to the concern for the terrible environmental crisis in which we are immersed, global warming and the loss of biodiversity, or even by other issues that are perceived as being closer to home, such as, for example, the problems affecting the periphery or public space in the urban environment.

Aware of the complexity of the subject of historic gardens and all the related issues – such as, for example, the care and renovation of plant heritage or the use given to villa gardens (in Veneto alone, our region, they number in the thousands) or even the management of historic public parks. Faced with the real risk of a banalising generic approach, talking at once about everything and nothing, in dealing with such a broad subject in the preparation of the conference and the book mentioned earlier, it seemed interesting to focus on a specific, possibly original and, to an extent, surprising topic. We have undertaken this endeavour after highlighting the need, also for institutions, to monitor the progress of theoretical and philological studies, and to apply original and updated methods of experimentation.

Thus, the idea arose to delve, with an apparently ironic look that perhaps borders on irreverence, into the moments when, especially in the last century, people looked back in history to replicate forms and models by dint of copying and imitating, with an attitude towards the past that today we can also read afresh from our greater awareness of some of the risks faced by contemporary culture when addressing the historical landscape.

This practice, habitual in all arts and all cultural products, takes on particular interest when we turn to gardens, bearing in mind that, for these “open”

works, looking back to the past is also related to the desire to give durability to an element that is inherently provisional and fragile, since it is composed above all of living matter subject to the inevitable cycles of life and death.

In the art of gardens, evocations of the past have taken innumerable forms: copies, recreations, fanciful restorations, illusory reinventions, old gardens restored to an original state that never existed, passing fads, tributes, fantasies.... We are not talking about a panorama of black and white, but of a combination of textures and greys, of sensations and readings that sometimes have accumulated and still accumulate different hues in the same place.

Indeed, if we reflect on it, the best-known garden compositions have derived precisely from this kind of thought trajectory, from processes of critical re-reading and exchange, from the reinterpretation of “types” and elements consolidated in the past – in a given geographical area and at a given historical moment – whose importance and authority were recognised through acceptance (or rejection) of the codes. So we are not talking about banal replicas, but about ways of metabolising experiences and transferring models – and not just aesthetic models – from one culture to another, direct relationships and connections that are not detrimental to a place's authenticity, which is also made up of the cultural roots and references that underpin a project, and its changes over time.

Therefore, it is important to chart a much more dynamic and articulated history than the rigid and partly misleading representation that, unfortunately, has contributed to build the history of gardens, which, as a discipline, did not develop in Italy until the 20th century (and in the mid-19th century elsewhere). In this process, it is our duty to try to do justice.

The traditional definition of the various compositional models with respect to more or less precise periods and geographical contexts (the Italian garden, the French garden, the English garden...), in which the garden is considered almost the incarnation of a nation, of a spirit, in certain cases even of a race, has led us to imagine the history of the garden as a kind of succession of these models over time. We see it as following a hypothetical linear evolution that links the earlier model to the later model, and from one country to another, based on a vision which we still have difficulties in shedding and which does not correspond to reality, but rather simplifies it.

“The period of exchanges” or, rather, the various “periods of exchanges”, specifically those that have affected the Italian garden, represent times of extreme vitality in garden culture, from a theoretical viewpoint and also in practice, encompassing both constructions *ex novo* and interventions in historical contexts. From the influences that it has contributed and received over the centuries, both in Europe

and overseas, one could say that the Italian-style garden is truly emblematic of a surprising and exciting history, with many aspects yet to be explored.

To observe the history of the garden from this perspective, trying to grasp the connections and the evolution of places that have always been extraordinary vessels of different cultures, aesthetics, fashions and ecologies – elements that are synthesised in the garden within a process undergoing constant evolution and renewal – is a truly exciting undertaking that offers many possibilities for research.

Among these, it is worth mentioning at least contemporary landscaping: there is a long list of professionals around the world who have been able to develop innovative forms through recourse precisely to the traditional language of garden art, which they then rework into original forms to create new projects or even intervene in historical contexts, people who have shown and continue to show an empathic and attractive approach to design that is able to take into account modern-day demands (tourism, conservation, climate change, etc.) while respecting the historical stratification of the place and context.

Specifically, the Swiss landscape architect Dieter Kienast (who died at a relatively young age in 1998) created a garden in Üetliberg in the early 1990s that seems a particularly successful example to us. In this case, it was through the effective use of lettering, a reinterpretation of contents and style models from different periods that is far removed from imitating or copying but which, on the contrary, manifests the designer's ability to explicitly evoke figures, meanings and symbols of the past, using a simple but effective compositional resource adopted from the history of the garden. We are talking precisely about the use of inscriptions, traced by Kienast himself, in one of his writings, in the history of garden art, starting with the Sacred Grove of Bomarzo, including the great landscape gardens of Stowe, Wörlitz or Ermenonville, and culminating with the contemporary creations of Jenny Holzer and Ian Hamilton Finlay.

Dieter Kienast has also provided the perfect conclusion for these brief notes, in the form of one of the ten theses of his famous "Set of Rules" for the garden, published in the journal *Lotus International* (no. 87, 1995: p. 62-81):

"Another basic premise of garden architecture is respect for the place: a concept that – even though it has been much abused – is still indispensable for our work, because it offers a means for avoiding the arbitrariness and interchangeability of solutions. The place's authenticity, defined by the images, the materials and the use made of them, continues to be decisive.

Gardens, parks and squares must show their own history, and also tell new stories. They are poetic places of our past, our present and our future."

These are words that can be readily shared and can inspire creations whose purpose is not so much to freeze the forms of history as to reinterpret them from a contemporary view of the places, their contexts and the people who inhabit and care for them.

## The history and nature of garden restoration in Italy

Giuseppe Rallo

The 6th ICOMOS-IFLA meeting on historic gardens held in Florence in 1981 and the charters for the restoration of historic gardens published for that occasion heralded a long period of studies and, above all, facilitated a change of attitude toward historic gardens in Italy, their conservation and the state of neglect into which many of them had fallen. After a period of debate of different ideas on the subject, in 1983 the Italian Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Environment created the National Committee for the Study and Conservation of Historic Gardens.

With the creation of the Committee, it seems that the garden acquired a new status within the framework of the national policies on cultural matters, which led to its definitive recognition as an integral, indispensable part of Italy's cultural heritage, in need of studies, attention, funds and political and cultural strategies, which had been practically non-existent since the end of the Second World War. With the publication of the Italian Charter for the Restoration of Gardens and the Florence Charter in 1981, a growing attention, first in theory and then in practice, has been perceived with respect to the garden and its stratification, not only as an expression of the art of composing a landscape, but also as a document capable of narrating the evolution in the "feeling" and value of nature, and the changing relationships between designed space and landscape. The papers that have been presented and the debates that have taken place in the congresses organised by the Committee define with increasing clarity and a growing number of examples an Italian way of approaching the restoration of gardens, based on the analysis of existing elements and the reading of their polymateriality, as well as on the succession of the versions that lead to the current state of the elements on which the intervention takes place.

The congresses organised by the Italian Ministry of Cultural Assets and Activities until 2000 featured significant experiences carried out in the main gardens under the care of the State and under the tutelage of government departments and the main national museums. A series of project workshops were also organised on the aspects outlined above, but omitting two major subjects: interventions in the landscape outside the garden, and the

value enhancement strategy, with the exception of a single important example, the castle of Racconigi (in Piedmont), where restoration of its large park was followed by a process of information gathering, management and value enhancement. The case of Racconigi marks a significant innovation in garden restoration in Italy, insofar as it was not an initiative undertaken only by the Ministry but also benefited from the active participation of the Piedmont Regional Government, private financial institutions and local councils, acting as a multidisciplinary training experience with excellent results. Together with the Royal Palace of Turin, this regional project has been replicated in other Savoyard marvels, such as the Queen's Villa, the Stupinigi hunting lodge and the successful project of the Royal Palace of Venaria.

At the same time, other important initiatives were carried out, such as the work performed in certain parts of the Medici Boboli Gardens, the Villa di Castello, with its extraordinary collection of citrus trees, and the Petraia Gardens, in Florence; the flower gardens of Villa Borghese, in Rome; the English garden and the Castelluccia garden of the Royal Palace of Caserta; the Villa Pisani, in Stra, in the province of Venice, and the Soranzo Cappello garden, in the city of Venice, among others. All these interventions have several points in common and have been directed and managed by landscape architects from the Ministry of Cultural Assets and Activities.

At the last congress held in Naples in 2000, organised by the National Committee for the Study and Conservation of Historic Gardens, the subject of the master plan or maintenance plan and the compatible use of the garden was discussed. An important paper written by experts from different disciplines was also published, the first of its kind in Italy, entitled *Bozza di Capitolo per il restauro del giardino storico* (Draft specifications for the restoration of historic gardens). Written by a team composed of experts from the Ministry of Culture, universities, the Italian Association of Landscape Architects and other professionals, the paper summarises the practical experiences acquired between 1990 and 2000.

The period between 2000 and 2020 was marked by a shift in outlook and perspective, instigated in part by the European Landscape Convention. The cultural scene has changed, and this has led to a rethinking of the meaning of the garden in the urban and landscape context. In addition to its historical dimension as a garden or park that forms part of a monumental ensemble, other values are added that are linked to its landscape and micro-environmental role, and as an identifying element of places and communities, opening the way for a series of activities to enhance its value. At the same time, in the last ten years, issues related to climate change and eco-environmental problems have also led to a review of the role and significance of historic gardens in the urban and regional ecosystem.

Today, large gardens are considered important natural systems for the ecosystemic management of the territory and are read as elements of a broader context that must progressively include the environment, agriculture, and social and economic aspects, significantly expanding the role that the historic garden can play in the urban and territorial structure. In this respect, the content of the 2021 state call for funding for the restoration of Italian historic gardens is highly significant. Framed within the National Recovery and Resilience Plan, ample space and value is given to issues inherent to the garden's management, botanical value and environmental and ecosystemic value, identifying these categories as the basis for each project, as has subsequently been the case. This call has elicited a considerable response and almost a thousand projects have been submitted. This not only evidences the magnitude of the national heritage of parks and gardens, but also the vitality, cultural interest and level of financial investment focused on the subject of historic gardens, taking into account that part of the funding is also allocated for training and national cataloguing.

## II.

# Historic gardens in Catalonia

## An approach to the diversity and typologies of gardens of heritage interest in Catalonia

Jordi Díaz Callejo

The concept of *historic garden* has taken root in language to define an old garden which has elements and values associated with it that make it a unique space. The Florence or Historic Gardens Charter, drafted by the ICOMOS and published in 1982, was an instrument for the recognition, rehabilitation and enhancement of the great monumental gardens. Over time, it has also become a reference point for facilitating the recognition of other more modest gardens. However, it is more common for the ex-

pression *historic garden* to be associated only with large gardens. That is why I consider it more appropriate to use the expression *garden of heritage interest*. Using it allows us to add to those already recognised as historic gardens other more modest gardens that do not hold sufficient historical significance and other gardens that have not received such recognition, but preserve consistent vestiges of garden elements, compositions or structures of great value, despite the fact that the garden as a compositional unit has been, in part, veiled by the transformations it has undergone.

A garden is a “space of land delimited, ordered and planted with pleasing plants (unlike the vegetable garden, which has productive plants) that is intended for the recreation of the residents of a house (private garden) or of an entire neighbourhood (public garden)”. This classic definition of a garden, which we have translated, was written by Nicolau Maria Rubió i Tudurí for the *Enciclopèdia Catalana*.

To speak of the diversity of the gardens of Catalonia is to speak of their richness and of the creativity of the successive societies, groups and individuals who have made them possible. Gardens are products of culture and, at the same time, producers of culture, and also one of the most fragile components of our heritage. A garden is a reflection of a way of understanding and relating to the environment and the landscape, of relating to other living beings, and is a witness to how a society lives. Catalan bourgeois society was very active from the mid-19th century and during the first third of the 20th century, which was when the great majority of the gardens of heritage interest in Catalonia were created.

### **The difficulty in establishing typologies in gardening**

Establishing a typological categorisation of the gardens that were developed during this period is a highly complex task that is fraught with difficulties. The most important, perhaps, is the limited literature available and the absence of studies and descriptions of the gardens of Catalonia, and the second is often related to the garden's state of upkeep and the usual overlapping of actions. All gardens are transformed from an initial composition; through the action of time and as a consequence of deliberate actions by their owners, they usually undergo a transformation to adapt them to new needs or new tastes.

There are three determining agents that act on a garden's morphology or typology: the owner or developer, the expert and the builder-carer. All three agents may in fact be the same person or they may be combined in different ways, but they are decisive for the garden's composition and image and its evolution.

### **Criteria and garden typologies**

The different typologies are established on the basis

of morphological criteria related to formal aspects, aesthetics and composition; these include sociological, political, urban design, architectural, and geographical criteria, in part, and also social, historical and religious criteria, in addition to the accumulation of personal experience.

After establishing the criteria and analysing numerous gardens, the following typologies were created, defined as follows:

*Domestic gardens*: the main feature that defines this typology is the fact that these gardens are considered an extension of the house. They are found in rural and urban areas, formalised as enclosures, yards and other similar spaces, with a great formal diversity.

*Plot bourgeois gardens*: these are the gardens in which the house is an omnipresent reference point in the garden. These are the typical plot gardens that usually surround the house on all four sides. In Catalonia, this type of detached house-garden unit is known by the term *torre*.

*Gardens/parks owned by members of Catalan high society or nobility*: these are extensive gardens and parks, attached to the stately homes of high-society Catalan families who have obtained their wealth in industry, commerce and finance. The garden is a completely separate entity from the house, which is no longer omnipresent.

*Factory and workplace gardens*: these are gardens grown within the grounds of factories, industrial complexes such as the industrial colonies (manufacturing communities that provided accommodation and services for the workers on-site), and wine and Catalan “cava” cellars.

*Gardens owned by institutions and societies*: these are gardens created and maintained by public administrations and official centres; gardens created by civil society bodies such as recreational and cultural associations, social clubs and athenaeums are also included in this typology.

*Urban gardens*: these are gardens created as a result of the need to organise and adapt the public spaces of the towns in which we live to our leisure, health and well-being needs.

*Health and health-related leisure gardens*: this comprises a large group of gardens directly related to health, such as those of clinics, hospitals and other health centres of all types, including spas. It is not possible to imagine a spa without a garden in which people can find physical and emotional repose.

*Gardens associated with religious heritage*: this typology includes the gardens of convents, monasteries, cloisters, shrines, cemeteries and other religious amenities.

*Botanical and collection gardens*: this group includes true botanical gardens, conceived as institutions specialised in the study, conservation and dissemination of plant diversity in accordance with scientific criteria and the exhibition of live plant collections. Most of them are owned and run by public

institutions such as town councils, universities or other government administrations.

We cannot conclude this approach to the diversity and typologies of gardens of heritage interest in Catalonia without mentioning the many gardens that have yet to be identified or recognised as such. There still remains a not insignificant number of gardens to be discovered in Catalonia. I am not talking about mysterious, secret or hidden places, but simply about gardens that no one has seen and appraised from a gardening or landscape perspective.

In the municipal catalogues of our towns and villages, there are many gardens that, when they appear, do so as gardens associated with dwellings. It is a common practice to catalogue the building and include in the data file that it has a garden, but normally there is no consideration or recognition of their possible value or interest. Most of them are probably not large gardens, but they are the gardens we have and are part of our gardening heritage. A garden, however modest it may seem at first glance, can facilitate the development of new capabilities that help improve our interpretation of other gardens. Let's hope we do not end up losing them.

In this article, we cite numerous gardens and their classification. Particular mention is made of the case of the garden of Can Comulada as one of the still hidden gardens that have gone unnoticed and are at risk of disappearing, and of the garden of Torre Palaresa in Santa Coloma de Gramenet, which possibly preserves vestiges of Catalonia's oldest garden.

## A project to analyse and appraise Catalonia's most important gardens

Elena Belart Calvet and Miquel Barba Vidal\*

This paper is a summary of the work commissioned by the Directorate General for Cultural Heritage, within the Government of Catalonia's Ministry of Culture. Its purpose is to analyse the state of conservation, the level of protection and knowledge of the most important gardens in Catalonia.

Law 9/1993, of 30 September, on Catalan cultural heritage, states in its preamble: "Cultural heritage is one of the basic testaments to the historical trajectory and identity of a national collectivity. The assets that comprise it constitute an irreplaceable legacy, which must be passed on in the best possible

\* This chapter is a summary of the work *La valoració i l'anàlisi dels jardins més rellevants a Catalunya*, written by Roser Vives de Delàs and Victoria Bassa Garrido, both from LIQUEN\_patrimoni i paisatge, commissioned by the Directorate General of Cultural Heritage of the Ministry of Culture of the Government of Catalonia.

conditions to future generations. The protection, conservation, development, study and dissemination of knowledge about cultural heritage is one of the essential obligations of public authorities."

In pursuance of this principle, the Law determines that, in order to protect the most salient assets comprising Catalonia's cultural heritage, they must be declared a cultural asset of national interest (given the Catalan acronym of BCIN). Accordingly, a number of protection categories are defined, based on the asset's characteristics: *historical monument*, *historical site*, *area of ethnological interest*, *archaeological area* and also *historic garden*. It is this category of *historic garden* that provides the reference framework for our work at the Architectural Heritage Protection Section to protect Catalonia's most important gardens. Law 9/1993 on Catalan cultural heritage defines this category as "the delimited space that is the outcome of the organisation by man of natural elements and may include structures involving stonework".

With the objective of promoting, strengthening the level of protection and generally enhancing the rich and abundant heritage related to Catalonia's most important gardens, jointly with the associated architectural, archaeological and artistic heritage, the Directorate General for Cultural Heritage's Architectural Heritage Service commissioned the study *La valoració i l'anàlisi dels jardins més rellevants a Catalunya* (Assessment and analysis of the most important gardens in Catalonia) (elaborated by Roser Vives and Victòria Bassa in 2021), supervised and led by the specialists from the Architectural Heritage Protection Section, which has established specific guidelines used by the Section's experts in drafting this document.

One fact that this study has brought to light is the urgent need to restore and conserve these heritage spaces. Their ephemerality, their transformation over time due to historical and style changes, urban development pressures, private interests and, currently, climate change are constant risk factors that threaten progressive loss of their values.

In this respect, the study aims to analyse and assess Catalonia's most important gardens; to ascertain their current level of protection and whether or not this is sufficient; their state of conservation; and to establish a conclusion for their protection through their declaration as a BCIN in the category of historic garden.

If they are not sufficiently important at the national level but they are at local level, it also proposes their protection as a cultural asset of local interest (given the Catalan acronym of BCIL). In this respect, it is necessary to foster collaboration between local bodies and regional councils so that, together, they can contribute to preserving the values of historic gardens.

When an asset is declared a BCIN under the category of historic garden, it is immediately pro-



vided protection, with monitoring of all the actions carried out by the Ministry of Culture's Territorial Heritage Committee.

Declaration as a BCIN must be approved by the Catalan Government, at the proposal of the Minister for Culture, and entails rights and duties for the owners with respect to the declared asset's preservation and maintenance. The declaration must also be endorsed by the Advisory Council of Catalan Cultural Heritage and the Institute of Catalan Studies as independent advisory bodies, with binding reports issued by specialists from different disciplines that confirm the exceptional nature of the natural area that it is wished to protect as a BCIN.

The main goal pursued by this study is to identify Catalonia's most important gardens based on a historical analysis, so that, in the future, these selected natural spaces will be protected thanks to their declaration as a cultural asset of national interest in the category of historic garden.

Accordingly, the study is divided into three parts. First, there is an informative volume explaining the purpose of the assignment and analysing the available protection tools, international laws, state laws and templates of the protection datasheets used by different public authorities in Catalonia to propose new additions, one for the study and another for collecting basic information about the garden to support the proposal for cataloguing. Then there is a second volume, which is the inventory of the selected historic gardens and which includes descriptive data and the garden's current protection status, with a proposal to strengthen its protection in the future, if deemed necessary. Finally, the third volume contains the individual data files of the gardens whose protection it is proposed to upgrade to BCIN – Historic Garden, or BCIL.

Specifically, a total of 257 gardens selected by territory have been inventoried, with an evaluation of their current protection status, shortcomings and the degree of urgency of their protection. Of these 257 gardens, the most significant have been selected to propose their declaration as BCIN or BCIL.

The information contained in the general inventory of the most important gardens in Catalonia is basic information that identifies and characterises the gardens and describes their situation in terms of their current level of protection and the level that would be desirable.

The information gathering process has been meticulous and exhaustive, including an analysis of the lists of the gardens catalogued in the current heritage inventory held by the Government of Catalonia's Directorate General for Cultural Heritage, the various municipal authorities responsible for the lower-level catalogues, and recognised bodies that are specialised in gardens within Catalonia. Despite this initial effort, and given the scope of the information currently available, it must be considered an initial stocktake. Consequently, it is proposed as an

open working instrument that will need to be built upon as time goes by.

This study provides a snapshot of the state of conservation and protection of the gardens in Catalonia that are considered most outstanding, and it identifies which of these elements are eligible for protection as a BCIN to control future interventions that may be detrimental to their value as heritage.

The study concludes with some open points of reflection for further work:

- It is important to establish guidelines in a reference document for the recognition, evaluation and cataloguing of gardens. This documentation would provide the consultation and support tool that would be used by the local and regional councils and by the municipal officials who would be responsible for carrying out this cataloguing.

- It is advisable to add the role of specialist with knowledge of gardens to participate in heritage committees in the different public administrations to ensure these gardens' preservation. It is essential to have specific proven knowledge in order to be able to catalogue a historic garden. This knowledge encompasses the multidisciplinary nature of different specialities.

- It is necessary to disseminate as much as possible and raise awareness among the general public of the importance of this heritage. It is necessary to ensure that these natural spaces can be enjoyed by future generations with the respect they deserve, balancing the demands of an increasingly complex society with the conservation of their heritage values.

## Between the “abandoned garden” and the *Verger de les galanies*: Artistic and literary representations of the garden in contemporary Catalonia

Margarida Casacuberta

With its fundamentally symbolic content, the painted, written or designed garden becomes a mirror of reality (imaginary, broken, deformed) filtered through the artist's subjectivity. Therefore, it is essential to analyse the historical, social and political context in order to read and understand the subject of gardens in all its complexity and depth.

Gardens are a fragile heritage, both in terms of the physical preservation of the so-called *historic gardens* and of the legibility of the literary and artistic representations that have been made over time. Consequently, the aim of this article is to trace and analyse some of the literary and artistic representations of the theme of the garden in the process of

building the myths and symbols of contemporary Catalonia, from the second half of the 19th century until the end of the Spanish Civil War, in the context of the crisis of European modernity.

The first section of the chapter, “From the ‘Garden of the Hesperides’ to the abandoned garden”, is based on the comparative analysis of the epic poem *L’Atlàntida* (1877), by Jacint Verdaguer, one of the first and most prominent builders of the symbols and myths of contemporary Catalonia, and the translation into architectural language that a young Antoni Gaudí made of the poem in the summer estate that the industrialist Eusebi Güell i Bacigalupi, enriched by trade with the Spanish colonies in the Americas, rebuilt in the area of Les Corts, coinciding with the preparations for the Barcelona Universal Exhibition of 1888. In a context of pan-European economic, social and political transformation, marked by the growing force of workers’ movements and the recent experience of the Revolution of 1868, Verdaguer laid the first (symbolic) stones of the founding myth of Barcelona, Catalonia and the Spanish world through a double process of poetic destruction and reconstruction of the mythical “Garden of the Hesperides”, situated in the heart of *L’Atlàntida*. Reproducing it in the property of the Güell López family can be interpreted as an attempt to use poetic and architectural language to legitimise the origin of the great fortunes derived from colonial trade as a driver for progress and the foundation of modern Catalonia, considered the factory of Spain and an indispensable part of the Spain of the Restoration.

However, the “productive”, creative capacity of the symbolic construction was unable to withstand confrontation with a reality characterised by the colonial crisis that culminated with the disaster of 1898 and the loss of the last vestiges of imperial Spain, and the increase in social unrest, which was especially intense in the city of Barcelona. The ideal garden becomes an abandoned garden. It would be the artist Santiago Rusiñol who would obsessively make it a motif of his literary and pictorial work. Thus, the chapter’s second section, “Santiago Rusiñol’s gardens of Spain”, interprets the abandoned garden as the space of beauty where the Catalan Modernist artist, living by and for art, “officials”, exhorting the reader/viewer to follow him in the personal adventure of exploring the chasms of the soul – pain, mystery, disease, death – undertaken by the poetic “I” as the only possible path for salvation amidst the sensation of *dégénérescence* of a Europe that is about to witness the imminent triumph of the new “barbarians” over “civilisation” and of a decadent, obsolete Spain, that lives on the past and must be regenerated through art and culture.

Therefore, in Rusiñol’s work, the motif of the abandoned garden allows a double reading, decadentist and regenerationist, as a representation of the beauty of what is dying and, at the same time, as overcoming death, historical time, through the ac-

tion of transformative nature. In this sense, the book *Jardins d’Espanya* (Gardens of Spain, 1903), published while the country was still reeling from the loss of Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines and intellectuals were reflecting on the place of Spain in the global political order, can be interpreted as a metonymy of the decadence of Spain: despite the apparent paradox, nature’s destruction of architectural structures created in an era of splendour that is no more admits a vitalist and regenerationist reading.

This is the option that political Catalanism will lean towards after the creation of the Regionalist League – the political party that will mark the modernisation of Catalan politics and lay the foundations for the institutionalisation of the culture of Catalanism – and the project for the construction of the “Catalonia-City” in the context of the regeneration of Spain. Throughout this process, the image of the garden continues to play a fundamental role in building the collective worldview. The aim is to build the mask of perfection that, by mimesis, reality should end up adopting. The garden, identified as a domestic paradise, accessible to everyone, becomes an “imaginary mirror”, an active, beautifying element of a turbulent reality that is systematically excluded from the *hortus conclusus* by the high walls that preserve the ideal world, small and perfect, made to human measure, from the savagery outside. This ideal world is represented in *Els dolços indrets de Catalunya. Colecció de dibuixos de Torné Esquiús* (1910), in the collection of poems by Josep Carner, *Verger de les galanies* (1911), or in *La Ben Plantada* (1912) by Eugeni d’Ors, located, in part, in the gardens of Tivoli.

However, the mask of perfection built using cultural materials is unable to withstand the onslaught of barbarity represented by the outbreak of the First World War, the end of the century of progress, which Ors himself symbolises through the disintegration of nature in its ordered, gardened and controlled form, in *Gualba, la de mil veus* (1915).

The symbolic struggle between culture and barbarity symbolised by the garden motif during the 50-year period between the creation of Verdaguer’s “Garden of the Hesperides” and the end of the Spanish Civil War, marking the definitive destruction of the mask of perfection as an antidote to brutality, finds a final and conclusive example in the article “Refugis i jardins” (Refuges and gardens) by Carles Rahola, published in *L’Autonomista* on 8 February 1938. In this article, the Girona-born writer laments and, at the same time, justifies the destruction of a public garden to build an air-raid shelter to safeguard the population in the context of a war that symbolised the struggle between democracy and fascism. As a side note, the article was used as evidence by the prosecution at the show trial that sentenced Carles Rahola to execution by firing squad in Girona, then occupied by Franco’s troops, in the early morning of 15 March 1939.

## Working with historic gardens

### Research as an instrument for the conservation of historic gardens: “The gardens of industrialisation on the River Ter”

Carles García Hermosilla

The Ter Museum was inaugurated in 2004. We soon realised that the presence of gardens, or, generically, urban greenery, was not anecdotal in the factories and industrial colonies of the Ter. However, apart from a few references in general-interest books and the odd study, there was a profound lack of knowledge of this heritage. In 2006, we embarked upon a research project with the initial goal of gaining more detailed knowledge about the gardens of the industrial colonies and factories of the Ter. The result of this study was finally published in 2019 under the title *Els jardins de la industrialització al Ter* (The gardens of industrialisation on the river Ter), which has given visibility to this heritage on the Ter and provides a useful starting point for restoring its value, despite the obvious difficulties in its conservation.

### The restoration of the Mossèn Costa i Llobera Gardens

Imma Jansana

The evolution of societies over time demands new ways of understanding and experiencing historic gardens. The restoration of the Mossèn Costa i Llobera Gardens, located in Montjuïc (Barcelona), is an example of this. These thematic gardens are home to an important collection of cacti and succulent plants, since their strategic location creates a microclimate with temperatures that are always about two degrees higher than anywhere else in the city of Barcelona.

In 2020, the gardens underwent a restoration project to improve their interior connectivity for users, improve accessibility for the park’s maintenance vehicles and restore the most historic parts and those with man-made structures, from historic architectural elements to fences, entrance gates, railings, plant props, signage, etc., homogenising the wide range of solutions established over the years.

Specifically, the actions carried out consisted of restoring the access to the park from the Miramar gardens, widening interior access to the cactus area, restoring the pergola square, widening the south path, designing cactus props and completing the ceramic signage

### Concepts, criteria and guidelines for intervention in historic gardens

Montse Rivero

Gardens are a joint undertaking by man and nature that are constantly kept in a state of delicate balance. They are a work of art that needs the fourth dimension, time, to exist and require continual maintenance and support if they are to develop as a work of art and to prevent their loss and disappearance. Their primary component is vegetation, which is living and perishable.

Intervening in a historic garden is a delicate task that requires knowledge, interdisciplinary work, prudence and humility. Without knowledge of the garden, its history and evolution, its social and artistic context, acting on a historic garden can bring about, through ignorance, the loss of its heritage values. Reading and analysing a historic garden is a task that requires the active involvement of different professional profiles who apply their disciplines to the garden object. Prudence is one of the essential classical virtues that must be exercised when working with a historic garden, in order to avoid making decisions that may be irreversible. Finally, humility is a necessary quality that restorers must possess, since they work with objects created by artists of the past and their mission is to preserve and, if possible, improve this legacy.

Working with a historic garden becomes a complex challenge, and managing complexity is not easy, but it is an exciting challenge.

### A thousand machines can never make a flower

Rosa Cerarols

Gardens are a cultural legacy of the first order, a material summation of both human and non-human life. The garden can also be understood as an artistic practice, which nowadays must be combined with the notion of all kinds of emergencies, social needs and environmental demands. The text highlights the transformative power of plants and the potential of gardens to dignify places, within the framework of activism and contemporary global thinking. Drawing from the experience of the Konvent cultural space in Cal Rosal (Berguedà), where the line of continuity between before and after dereliction has been the garden, we present the *Beirut 480m* project. This is an activist gardening action centred in a building in the Karantina district (Beirut) which seeks to engage local people in remediating the catastrophic damage after the explosion of August 2020.

*A thousand machines can never make a flower*, neither those of the industrial revolution in the Konvent nor those of modern-day sea transport or the abandoned containers in the port of Beirut.