



CASTELLO PAPADOPOLI GIOL

dal 1192

WHERE NATURE MEETS ARCHITECTURE

In 1850, Count Spiridione Papadopoli commissioned Vicenza-born Francesco Bagnara, set designer at the La Fenice Theatre, and lecturer at the Academy, with realisation of his estate in San Polo di Piave. It was to stand on the site of an ancient tower that belonged first to the Da Tolentinos and then to the Gabrieli family, a neo-Gothic style building surrounded by a vast romantic park.

In San Polo di Piave, Bagnara planned and built embankments with winding paths running across them, generous clearings and the lake in which the castle still reflects. Great importance was given to the selection and arrangement of the plants, rare and exotic species as was fashionable for the period, while large groves of trees were laid out according to a logic of perspectives.

Unlike the gardens that had been so popular during previous centuries, romantic parks saw geometric order and obsessive symmetry replaced by irregularity and unexpected asymmetry, straight lines by curves, square walled-in fish ponds by sinuous little lakes with muddy banks, the flat uniformity of the terrain and architectonic terraces by gentle slopes interrupted with bumps and dips, the artificial jets of fountains and water effects by babbling brooks, small waterfalls and springs, and order by carefully calculated disorder.

Visits to these new kinds of garden were an invitation to engage emotionally with the different landscapes that gradually revealed themselves, and visitors exploring these parks were immediately struck by them.

In 1865, the historian Luigi Dall'Oste described the San Polo park as: “[...] *large gardens laid over seemingly naturally uneven foundations surround the building, and here you come across quite unexpected, peaceful little lakes or crystal clear streams, then a tinkling waterfall, a solitary little island, and tiny mounds and shrubs and huts with the most amazing variety and beauty of plants and flowers everywhere... All the rarity and pleasantry that the renowned Bagnara's fervid imagination managed to portray from reality, all took shape here and came to life [,,,]*”

Bagnara designed a garden with paths winding through it, over mounds of earth pushed to excess to obtain those effects that he so adored and creating those landscapes that for a while had represented the scenography in Italian and European theatres.

Later, Count Nicolò Papadopoli, as part of the extension and reworking of this residence inherited from his cousin Spiridione, summoned a certain Monsieur Durant or Durand, from France a very famous landscape gardener in the second half of the nineteenth century, but of whom we know now next to nothing. He tasked him with “giving the park at San Polo a modern makeover”. By then in fact, French fashion had managed to combine the picturesque aspect of English gardens with the extreme linearity of their French counterparts.



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Antonio Caccianiga wrote this about Monsieur Durant: “*He has followed a design in the latest manner, with a noble appearance that naturally calls for infinite painstaking maintenance. Following excellent advice, he has moved the water further away from the house, traced grandiose curves, and on very light mounds of earth planted perennial ryegrass, quite similar in appearance to green velvet. The masses of flowers close to the house, arranged in regular patterns, with all those coloured-leaf plants recently introduced into gardening, when seen from a distance perfectly imitate huge Gobelins tapestries. Having thinned the plants and cut down the conifers that decorated the old garden, beautiful groves of trees still remain, in a new layout, but the huge masses of vegetation have disappeared to make way for magnolias and elegant shrubs. Overall it is a very mannerly change.*”

This kind of organisation called for precise continual maintenance and thus provided work for some twenty gardeners.

