

Villa Godi Malinverni



The first villa of Andrea Palladio (1542)

Lugo di Vicenza

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Andrea Palladio (1508-1580)

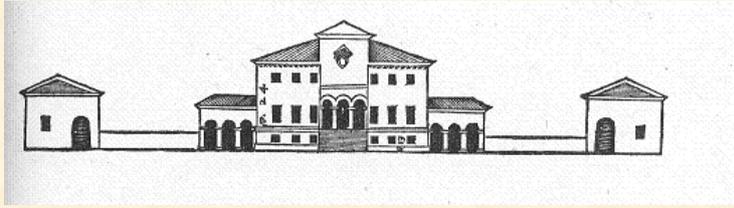


Andrea Palladio was born in Padua in 1508, son of Pietro della Gondola who was a mill worker. After moving to Vicenza at a young age, Andrea took a job in the very active workshop of the so-called Pedemuro who specialized in cutting marble and sculpture. It was during this time of apprenticeship that Andrea got “noticed” by Giangiorgio Trissino, an aristocrat and refined intellectual of the Venetian Mainland. Trissino decided to assign Andrea the commission of restoring his wonderful Villa Cricoli, located just outside Vicenza. He also decided to take Andrea to Rome for his very first time.

Thank to the ancient roman buildings that he could see not only in Rome, but also in Vicenza, Verona and Padua, and through the experience of the works of some of the most prominent architects such as Giulio Romano, Michele Sanmicheli, Sebastiano Serlio and

Jacopo Sansovino, Andrea was able to develop his own original style that we can still admire in some of his important works such as Villa Almerico, known as “La Rotonda” and Villa Barbaro in Maser, which was frescoed by Veronese.

The Architecture



Villa Godi Malinverni is the very first villa Palladio realized, as quoted in his Four Books on Architecture. The commissioner and owner of the property was Gerolamo Godi, who had it built for his father Antonio as announced on a relief set just above the loggia by the entrance. The work was completed in 1542. The villa, which stands on the slopes of the Lonedo hill overlooks the Astico river and features some elements typical of castles, such as “la colombaia” or columbaria. Simulating a little tower, it would serve to control and dominate the valley below. The central staircase’s main access, rising to the noble floors and built on top of the single archway supporting the loggia, recalls in a way the typical structure of medieval lift bridges, hence the need to control all the entrances to the family’s private areas. The central body in the front part of the villa is set backward in opposition to the scheme of the villas with towers usually built in the Veneto

region. On the sides of the villa are two right-angle projecting bodies. The back of the villa comes forward, and in the middle of the building that corresponds to the main hall there is a serliana which was built later during the restoration works in 1550, at the place of the original roman thermal window.

The plan of the main house is based on the concept of symmetry: in the middle there are the loggia and the main hall, also considered the “heart” of the villa, and on the sides there are the rooms, four smaller rooms on each side. Of the two sides, only the left side with the three arcades corresponds to the original project. The one on the right is longer with five arches above which are five windows and was built at the end of the seventies of the 16th century.

The internal decoration

In his *Four Books on Architecture* Palladio mentions the names of the artists who worked inside the villa: Gualtiero Padovano (Padova, 1510 to about 1552), Battista Del Moro (Verona, 1514-1575) Battista Zelotti (Verona, 1526-Mantova, 1578).

The interior of the villa is frescoed by two different schools of painters, very different in style, in their subjects and their use of colour. Facing the entrance of the villa, in the main hall and in the left wing it is possible to see the so-called *classical* school, that is the frescoes done by Battista del Moro and Battista Zelotti. False windows are beautifully painted with gods and Greek landscapes. Figures of men are depicted full of strength and virility and female figures recall abundance and fertility; *caryatides* (instead of the more common *telamons*) and epic tales complete the decoration. The colours of these frescoes are more tenuous, not just because they have been restored in very small areas, but because the painters who decorated

this part of the building preferred using the so-called ancient rose, the sapphire light blue and the yellow-earth.

In the right wing of the villa, it is possible to see the other school called *mystic*, who's main painter is Gualtiero Padovano. This wing of the villa corresponds to the restored wing. The artist often paints offers to domestic firesides and satyrs; instead of caryatides he paints telamons; figures in which animals are mixed with men, can be fearful, almost ghoulish. The representation of the Greek gods would derive from the influence of the classical school (the two schools of painters involved here worked almost at the same time). The colours of these rooms are more "jazzy", which is due not only to the restoration done after World War I, but above all by the artist who used a bitter green and a stronger yellow.

During World War I the villa was occupied by the British Command. The movie, *Senso* by Lucchino Visconti (1954), one of his most famous, was shot in the magnificent rooms of the villa.

The room of Muses and Poets



Painted by Battista del Moro are big caryatides in monochrome, resting upon a base, and supported by a trabeation are painted puttos, books and musical instruments. In the panels on the walls, Poets with laurel crowns and the nine Muses appear, but only some of them can be recognized by the object or symbol they hold. In particular, in the decoration on the right side of the entrance, the Muse of Astronomy Urania can be identified. In addition, Dante, one of the most important Italian poets and one of the fathers of the Italian Language, can be seen above the fireplace. The chandelier is Venetian, 18th century.

The room of the Olympus



Painted by Battista Zelotti. A low base supports architectural ruins that imitate white marble and red bricks; inside niches are fragments of statues. Windows and doors are decorated with false frames of fruit, flower ornaments and small pediments. At the back of the fireplace, we see some deities laying on clouds and painted with varied colours. In the centre is Jupiter and Juno, then Cybele, the goddess of architecture with a tower on the head. Ceres, the goddess of the harvest, is seen with a bunch of wheat. Mercury can be easily recognized and Cronus, the god of time, holds a sickle. Diana the goddess of hunting is seen with a bow. Facing the fireplace on the right, we can see Venus and Cupid with Bacchus the god of wine and many additional gods. In the hood of the fireplace the Fall of the

God Vulcan has been painted, a subject similar to the decoration at Te Palace in Mantua, but less grotesque than the paintings of Giulio Romano.

On the left we can admire Mars, Neptune and a young girl. The line drawing behind comes from an afterthought of the author. In this room we can notice the indifference of gods for human beings: none of the gods on their cloud thrones are glancing down and taking care of mankind. Also in this room is a 18th century Venetian chandelier

The room of Venus



Painted by Battista Zelotti is a scene of Venus, Cupid and the god Vulcan in the hood of the fireplace, where the name comes from. The golden decoration of the triclinium on which Venus sits, is very refined indeed. Also as beautiful is the contrast between the rosy skin of the goddess and snow-white drape that covers her. On the walls, long Ionic columns divide the room. One the right of the fireplace, above the door, is the allegorical painting of Justice with Pluto on the left and Cronus on the right. Looking the wall before the fireplace, we can see a big panel with Aeneas and Dido. On the right a young boy and a page come from a false door. This is a beautiful trompe l'oeil painting, a very common technique also showcased in the work of Paolo Veronese.

Above this false door is the allegorical painting of Temperance, and on the door, which leads to the

next room, is the allegorical painting of Strength. At the other wall are again figures of statues inside false niches representing Jupiter, with the symbols of the eagle, and Neptune. The chandelier is inlaid in wood and dates back to the 17th century from a Venetian galley

The room of Arts



Painted by Battista Zelotti, the name comes from the allegorical figures of Arts, painted above the false arches that frame the golden statues and the bronze coloured busts. On the sides of the doors, painted in sand colour, there are the allegorical paintings of Spring and, on the opposite side, Summer. Both the paintings have images of prisoners on the sides. In the false window a Greek landscape in ruins is painted and its frame is decorated by trophies with puttos, weapons, and musical instruments. The decoration is completed with niches in which painted statues of gods are frescoed: Bacchus, Apollo, Mercury and another divinities are not easy to recognize. The chandelier is a 18th century Venetian.

The main hall



Painted by Battista Zelotti, the walls are divided by white architectural elements, Corinthian columns and pediments. They are held together by a basement decorated with monochrome panels, in which the influence of the architect Palladio is clear. Standing in the middle of the room and facing the main door, we can notice two false windows on the right and left walls. In the first there is a landscape with the Rape of Europe (when Jupiter transforms himself into a bull and kidnaps Europe), in the second the Rape of Ganymede. According to tradition, the gentleman who sits on the border of the window is Gerolamo Godi, the owner of the villa. Looking at the loggia on the left wall we see the painting of the battle between Darius and Alexander. On the opposite wall, the body of Darius is returned by Alexander.

Both episodes are within architectural frames created to give the illusion of an external setting. In order to complete the decoration, puttos with a bunch of roses and female figures often sit on the frames that have been painted. Above the main entrance that faces the loggia the painter has depicted the allegorical scene of Hercules between Virtues and Labour, within an elaborate wooden framework. In the architrave above the main entrance there is the motto “et libera nos a malo” (and keep us away from evil) that corresponds to the sentence written outside in the loggia “stay away you, profanes”. On the three window-doors there is the Fame between two Prisoners whose meaning is linked to success obtained by following the law, a concept that comes from Roman history. The chandelier is a 18th century Venetian.

The room of the Putto



Painted by Gualtiero Padovano, the name of the room comes from the image of the little boy sitting on the window in front of the landscape. It is decorated with Ionic columns and false niches inside which are statues of divinities. All around the cornice of the ceiling runs a frieze with other gods. During the 19th century the whole room had been painted with dark drapes to cover the nakedness then removed during the restoration. The decoration has been completed with panels of grotesques, a particular kind of decoration that was developed immediately after the discovery of the Domus Aurea of the Emperor Nero in Rome in the 15th century. During that period, the decorations were completely buried in the ground and therefore called grottos from which the name of the style “grotesques” comes from. These decorations are often linked to alchemy or the world of farmers. The doors have been decorated with the same style. The chandelier is a Bohemia crystal and dates back to the 18th century.

The room of Triumph



Painted by Gualtiero Padovano, the name comes from the frieze on the upper part of the room. The idea and extended shape of figures are taken from the Triumphs of Caesar, a group of works by Andrea Mantegna. The big landscape on the front wall of the fireplace is very interesting and it is possible to see the Colossus of Rhodes. In the hood of the fireplace is the fresco of Securitas, the divinity who protects the house. The decoration on the walls show telamons who are holding the trabeation and panels in monochrome. The scene on the ceiling is very different because it was painted by Zelotti and it shows in an oval wooden frame Minerva with Prometeo. Zelotti also painted the other panels with puttos that complete the decoration of the ceiling. In this room the light holders of the torches date back to the 17th century.

The room of Caesars



Painted by Gualtiero Padovano, whose use of colour in this room is very interesting. Corinthian columns with golden capitals divide the walls in sections opening to serene landscapes, always in relation with the real nature around the villa. In these beautiful landscapes of big blue skies, mountains and rivers, the presence of man is suggested by small coloured figures or by some simple architectural elements. The room's name comes from the busts of the Emperors, sculpted realistically above the doors and the fireplace. The series of "busts" start from the iconographic motive of the Roman Emperors, often used in the decorations of villas. Usually, the succession of Emperors derives from the "De vita duodecim Cesarum libri VIII" by Suetonius. Since the choice of the Emperors were linked to the intention of the owner to elaborate himself, it was possible that the

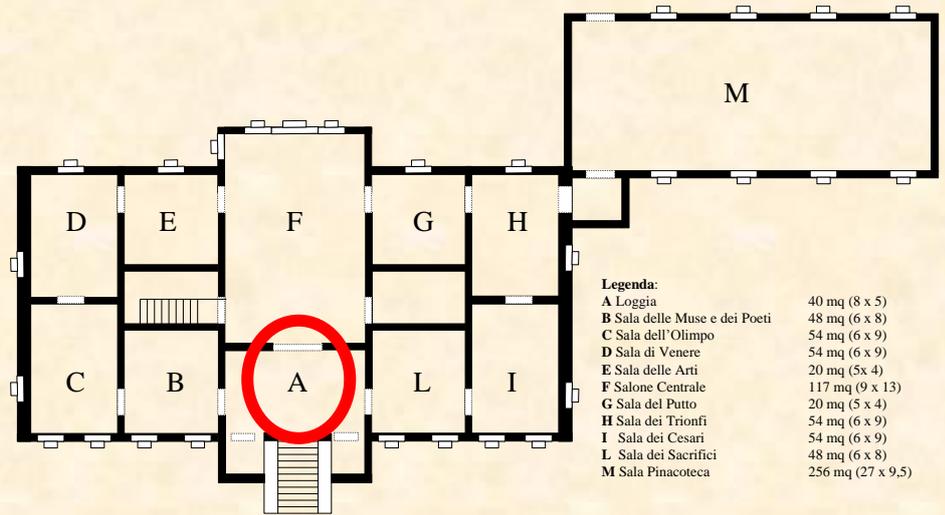
Caesars not found in the list of the Latin writers, were painted. It happened sometimes that the owner and commissioner of the villa held himself as a descendant of one of the Roman Emperors' and therefore added his own famous origins changing the original series..

The room of Sacrifices



Painted by Gualtiero Padovano, the Doric columns hold a continuous trabeation and in the spaces between them are landscapes and niches that imitate rusticated stones with statues of divinities. The name of the room comes from the two scenes above the doors that show Roman sacrifices painted in monochrome

The loggia



Painted by Gualtiero Padovano. The decoration is linked to the architectural structure of the loggia. In the ceiling there is Mercury and Spring. According to tradition, the Valley that embraces the villa can be recognized in the landscapes painted on the walls. In the arches above the entrance to the rooms there are grotesques that show the Vestal of Abundance who carries hoops of fruits and a snake symbol of intelligence that keeps away satyrs, the symbol of evil. In the two false doors there are two characters, a country woman with a spindle and a farmer with a hoop full of agricultural products. It is important to remember that worms of silk were often cultivated in the kitchen gardens next to villas and that the

production of fabrics was a mean of nourishment for the commissioners of villas. Also water is an element necessary to the life of the villa and a river that flowed not far from the villa is the subject of the landscapes painted in the loggia. Above the main entrance there is the figure of Securitas who protects the family. In the architrave the sentence is sculpted “procul este profani” which means “stay away you profanes”, a sentence that can mean the intention of the commissioner to keep away those people who did not have the capacity to understand the program of decoration chosen for his villa.

The gardens and the park



In the back of the villa, overlooking the park are the small Italian gardens with fountains and ponds, elements necessary to the sojourn in the villa. There are about fifty statues sculpted by the workshop of Marinali and of Albanese. The arrangement of these small gardens dates back to the end of the 17th and the beginning of the 18th century.

The park, as it can be seen today with secular plants and 2600 meters of boulevards, was arranged and settle in 1852 by Count Andrea Piovene (the same person who founded the Museum of Fossils) who followed the drawing of the architect Antonio Caregaro Negrin. In the middle there is a lake and in the area in

which plants are thicker there is the so-called “corner of memory”, dedicated to the loved persons who lived in the villa and whose names are written on small cylindrical or pyramidal steles. At the end of the park there is a big portal in rusticated stones which probably used to be the main gate of the villa. On this portal there is the sentence "Ingredere et Laetaberis".

The Fossil Museum



It was founded in 1852 by Count Andrea Piovene with fossils found in the same year by the geologist Achille de Zigno in the near Chiavon (the stream that flows near Breganze). The poet Giacomo Zanella drew inspiration for his most beautiful page, inspired by the contemplation of the "twisted shell."

In 1972 the Museum was able to have his final arrangement by Prof. Julian Small, who classified the specimens, in collaboration with Prof. Remo Malinverni.

In 2007 the Museum was restored by Dr. Ishmael Sostizzo with the collaboration of three young volunteers, under the sponsorship of the Pro-Lugo.

The finds date from the Oligocene period, ie about 30 million years ago. *"Man, you walk between these walls, from which thirty thousand millennia of history of the ancient age of the earth look at you, consider that all of human history, from its origins to today, is nothing more than the story of a day and all of your existence history is the story of a moment, a moment in the infinite."*
Remo Malinverni

Flora

Inside the museum are kept 352 species of which 215 of Chiavon ,69 of Salcedo and 68 commons to both the localities. This flora has similarities with current types of the American continent, of a part of Asia and Africa, and also of the Australian continent and of the Mediterranean region, while the flora of Bolca has more affinities with the current floras of the West Indies and of the Australian continent.

Famous are the palms, of which is particularly noted the impressive **PALM FOSSIL**, located horizontally in the center of the salon of the

museum, 9,85 meters high, discovered in 1863, complete with roots, trunk and leaves, the extraction of which took 4 years of work. It is considered remarkable finding also and especially because it is the largest exemplary of fossil palm, completely preserved, discovered till today.

Fauna

In the museum are collected: foraminifera, corals, brachiopods, clams, mussels, gastropods, crustaceans, echinoderms, fish. These last are carp.

The Family

The Godi family has ancient origins, dating back to 1200.

Godi Gerolamo

Gerolamo Godi with his brother Pietro committed to Palladio to the design of the homonymous villa in Lonedo. He lived in Vicenza, in the same district S.Vito (or St. Lucia) where even Palladio lived.

From March to November 1554 he was superintendent of the law of the Palazzo della Ragione at Vicenza.

Godi Orazio

By judgment of 1578 he was banished for having killed in his home Fabio Piovene, son of Tommaso Piovene, and his assets in Carrè and Marano were confiscated and given in feud to the Piovene family. His home in Vicenza, by decree of the Council of the Ten, was razed and rebuilt in 1700 with the following inscription:

"Where, in 1578 by decree of the Tens the houses of the killer Orazio Godi were razed, the

Storato brothers built in 1773 this wing of their house and the scale. Giovanni Scola Heir poses. 1876" It seems however that despite the lightning of the Serenissima, Orazio Godi had all the time to make himself wild bird. The Venetian Government showed the greatest kindness to the children of Orazio returning them more than thirty ducats already confiscated to the family, raising the wonders of Magagnò (Battista Maganza from Este), painter and poet who devoted one of his poems to this fact.

Godi Marzio

Born in 1655, killed in Trent in 1690.

He had the reputation as a tyrant for many atrocities committed and his name still arouses horror and terror.

It is said that wanting revenge of two people who had offended him, "his goods caught them, brought them in the cellar and then they died suffocated by wine."

Also: "his goods took the best and the most beautiful maidens of the country, they stripped and danced naked, and after he vented his lust, he brought them back home"

He was put in prison from which he escaped and went in Trent where he was killed by one of his natural sons.

In '700 the ownership of the villa passed to **Piovene**.

Massimiliano was the last survivor of the noble Godi - Pigafetta family and was buried in St. Michele at Vicenza (Chapel Godi).

During the First World War also, this villa was the **headquarters of English**.

Here **Lucchino Visconti**, taking advantage from the beautiful scenery offered by the the villa, turned one of his most famous films, **Senso**, in 1954.

In 1960 the villa was bought by **Prof. Remo Malinverni** who brought it back to its glory after 10 years of restoration and opened it to the public.