

## **Different aesthetics for building designs and urban design within central Europe**

Between the 14<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, counter-reactions to the medieval practices of otherworldliness sprouted within central Europe. These movements helped with the production of new forms in building design and urban design within its regions. This new wave of social revolution later became known as the Renaissance, that which established the age of secularism. At first, Renaissance works of art and architecture demonstrated the conscious revival and development of certain elements of ancient Greek and Roman thought and material culture. This time period was a “re-birth” of Greek and Roman cultures, architecturally characterized by the ideal balance between stillness and movement.

As time went on, the delicate application of human form was reflected in these Renaissance works to help construct the peak of this time period later known as the High Renaissance. Works from the High Renaissance display restrained beauty, where all of its parts act as subordinate cohesive composition of the whole. Italian artists, most notable of them being Michelangelo, perfected this form of exceptional artistic production during the High Renaissance based on symmetrical influences of the human body and their relationship to structural works. From this artistic form, new applications of intellectual thought established different nuances between these relationships. New artificial relationships between the human form and their relationship to structural works began to flourish, diverting from the natural relationships of these works that were seen during the High Renaissance era. Known today as Mannerism, this new style of architectural form comprised of works that emphasized elongated proportions, stylized poses, and a lack of clear perspective. The divergent practice of artificial form established a new path to architectural practices that were mostly implemented by Italian artists during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. These works later became known as the Baroque style.

The Mannerist and Baroque movements that followed the High Renaissance era revolutionized a new principle in artistic form: the exaggeration of movement in distinctive, dramatic ways. Both styles have similar overlaps, but they also have polar characteristics. The evolution of these secular movements which influenced the artistic styles found between the Early Renaissance and Baroque eras can be seen in the Italian San Lorenzo library in Florence and the Villa Lante at Bagnano. The staircase to the San Lorenzo library was designed and constructed by Michelangelo, and the Villa Lante was designed by Vignola. Both of these works display Mannerist and Baroque designs that are rooted in High Renaissance practices.

In Michelangelo’s staircase entrance to the San Lorenzo library, there are many indications of its design exemplifying mannerist art and an introduction to the Baroque expression. Upon entering the Ricetto, a grey and dark atmosphere and aesthetic engulfs the area. The vestibule entrance is surrounded by the playful rule breaking of classical decorum found in High Renaissance forms that violate previous conventions of classical design. Columns are clustered together, giving the structure and the architecture of it less formal control and freedom. The random placements of curvilinear structures underneath

column bases, which are suspended from the ground floor, give a sense of mysticism for their purpose in the environment. The spiral-shaped staircase acts as an upstream “river of knowledge” that pours out from the library. Connecting the lower Ricetto to the suspended reading room above, Michelangelo playfully toyed with the idea of the staircase acting as an obstacle to a destination that only few can reach. In contrast to this dynamic environment that Michelangelo designed, typical building structures with High Renaissance characteristics focused more on the emphasis of open spaces and the display of beauty through static equilibrium. This form of dynamism can be similarly noted as well in urban design.

The garden design at Villa Lante creates a cultivation of sensuality that appeals to all of the five senses. The urban design of the villa offers a multitude of different experiences in differently designed parts of the environment, characterized by theatrical and sensual rule breaking through complex multi-use designs. Throughout the garden, there are examples of mazes within hedges and inverted vase bases that act as small aqueducts. This is a prime example of the beginnings of over-emphasizing proportions and integrating the special relationships between leisure landscaping and livable environments. These integrated spaces are typical characteristics found within Baroque structures, whereas former designs from previous stylistic eras distinctly separated the two. The aqueduct that runs through the center of the Villa, that directs viewers towards the vanishing point of the garden space, paradoxically displays a stream within a stream. The curvature of the stonework at this villa brings life to its bearing walls that structurally support its fountains and water pools. This is a distinctive indication of whimsical humor in villa and landscape architecture not previously implemented seen in earlier villa structures. This design and style abandoned the high moral seriousness with which classical forms were previously appropriated. The decoration and splendor of these works were characterized by the emphasis of drama through complex geometries, creating a well-orchestrated movement of the kinetic designs in hidden, whimsical meanings.