

According to Repetti, writing in 1843, the Medici palace at Seravezza “fu ordinato nel 1559 dal Duca Cosimo sul disegno di Bartolommeo Ammannato”.¹ Over a century later, in 1965, Buselli published documents revealing that construction began in 1561, and was largely finished by 1565.² Though the attribution of the palace to Ammannati is now generally accepted, Buselli ascribed the design to Buontalenti, a name first suggested by Mori in 1936.³

Hitherto, the early visual documentation of the Medici building has been limited to Utens’s lunette of 1598/99. A newly discovered sixteenth-century drawing with a plan of the Seravezza palace and of its various garden elements, set in a schematic bird’s-eye-view of the surrounding area, is therefore of singular importance (Fig. 1).⁴ Drawn in pen and brown ink on a sheet of medium-weight paper measuring 435 x 590 mm, the site is represented with the palace in the south-east corner (bottom left as bound; bottom right as reproduced here). The plan of the building shows the ground floor, with measurements in all the rooms. Curiously, the two salient pavilions of the rear, or garden, facade are wider than those built, although incised parallel lines indicate the position of the actual walls. On the drawing, the pavilions have windows also in the extent of wall projecting beyond the width of the rear facade.

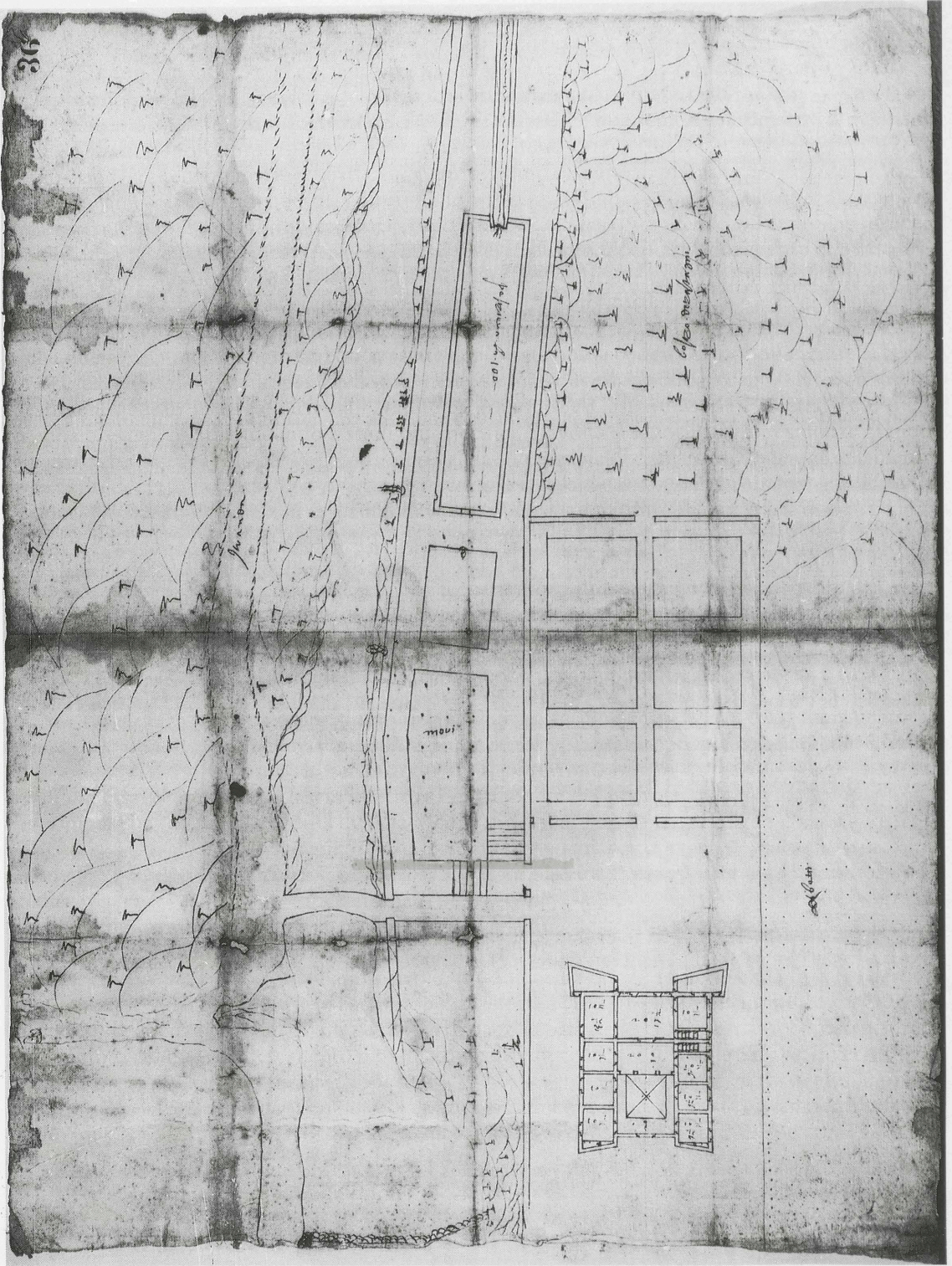
To the north of the palace, then, lie the garden areas, to the west the river and road, while tree-clad hills rise to both the west and east. Inscriptions identify various features of the layout; and on the verso, in the same hand as the recto, is inscribed: “Castagno del casino di Ser/aevza [*sic*]”. The inscriptions were written by Davide Fortini, whose presence at Seravezza is documented for the years 1562-63.⁵ It is reasonable to assume that he also made the drawing, though various factors suggest that it was done somewhat later than 1562/63, closer in time to the well-known account of the Seravezza estate, written in 1568.⁶ Not only can all of the features listed there be found in the drawing, but both the account and the inscription on the drawing specify that the fruit trees between the river and the walled-in garden were then newly planted (“frutti nuovamente piantati” in the document; inscribed “movi”, that is “novi” on the drawing). However, the structural differences between the drawn plan and the palace as actually built merit further thought and investigation, and elucidation of these issues may eventually lead to a more precise dating of the sheet.

The 1568 document is in any case an excellent guide to the drawing, allowing us to distinguish without a doubt between the entrance (south) and rear (north) facades of the palace, which Buselli repeatedly confused in his 1965 monograph, as did Mignani in her description of the Utens lunette.⁷ The drawing concentrates on what was laid out behind the palace, namely “uno pezzo di pratello” with the newly-planted fruit garden, confining with the river on one side, and the “poggio salvatico comunale” on the other. The 1568 document identifies the trees planted on the “poggio salvatico” as “faggi”, whereas the drawing notes that they are “abbetti”.⁸ Interestingly, also the Utens lunette seems to show us pine trees in this area, distinct in form and colour from Utens’s generic tree-type. Behind the *pratello* was “uno orto murato intorno”, which in the drawing is divided into six large beds. The description then moves to the “selva di castagni”, laid out to the north of the *orto*, called a “boscho di castagni” in the drawing. To the right, or west, of the *selva* was a long and narrow strip of land, bounded by the river, which was the location of “dua vivai murati”, the largest of which is labelled “peschiera” on the drawing. Fortini included the channel of water that fed the *vivai*, and also two small outlets in the river bank.

But what was the purpose of the drawing? At the present state of research it is possible to say only that, in the light of the inscription on the verso, it seems to have been made in order to document the location and/or extent of the chestnut woods with respect to the rest of the estate. Nevertheless, for us its greatest immediate significance lies in the fact that it is the only contemporary drawing discovered to date of the layout of the Seravezza palace and its grounds.

Following page:

1 Davide Fortini, plan of the Medici palace and gardens at Seravezza, ca. 1568. ASF, Corporazioni religiose sopresse dal governo francese, 119 (SS.ma Annunziata), Fa. 1274, c. 36.



NOTES

The drawing here published was found in the course of research undertaken for the Italian Architectural Drawings Photograph Collection (IADPC) at the Photo Archives, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC.

- ¹ *Emanuele Repetti*, *Dizionario geografico fisico storico della Toscana*, V, Florence 1843, p. 255. He does not give a source for either the date or the identity of the architect. The best modern account of the palace at Seravezza, which refers to all the older bibliography, is *Isa Belli Barsali*, *Ville e committenti dello Stato di Lucca*, Lucca 1980, pp. 343-347.
- ² *Franco Buselli*, *Palazzo Mediceo a Seravezza*, Empoli 1965, p. 28.
- ³ *Ibidem*, pp. 25, 42-54.
- ⁴ In the index to the volume, c. 36 is identified with the description "Disegno del Casino di Seravezza". I have not been able to discover why the drawing was kept with material concerning the properties of the convent of SS.ma Annunziata. It may have arrived there by mistake, which would explain why the drawing was overlooked for so long.
- ⁵ The identification of the hand as Fortini's can be confirmed through comparison with his autograph letters, for instance that of 1562 in the ASF, Mediceo del Principato, Fa. 495, cc. 343-344. For the documents recording his presence at Seravezza, see *Buselli* (n. 2), pp. 176, 182-183, 189, 190. On Fortini see now *Giuseppe La Tosa*, voce "Fortini, Davide", in: *Diz. Biogr. Ital.*, LIX, 1997, pp. 192-194; and *Emanuela Ferretti/Giovanni Micheli*, *Il palazzo di Cosimo I a Cerreto Guidi*, Vinci 1998, pp. 73-85. I should also like to thank Dr. Lisa Goldenberg Stoppato of the Medici Archive Project, who checked in the Project's database, "Documentary sources for the arts and humanities", and found several documents relating to Davide Fortini.
- ⁶ It has been published many times; see, for instance, *Belli Barsali* (n. 1), pp. 343-344; and *Buselli* (n. 2), pp. 56-57.
- ⁷ *Daniela Mignani*, *Le Ville Medicee di Giusto Utens*, Florence 1980, p. 66.
- ⁸ According to a document published by *Buselli* (n. 2), pp. 30, 178, in November 1562 over three thousand fir trees were planted on Monte Costa, the "poggio salvatico" of the 1568 document.