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## The History of Gardens: *Geistesgeschichte* or *Naturgeschichte*?

The motto with which Wiesław Juszczak commenced his excellent essay entitled “Dzieło sztuki czy fakt historyczny?”, in which he sought an answer to questions regarding the subject matter of art history, is as follows:

My dress comes from the era of a king of the Qing dynasty. So many beautiful women wore it for dancing that its folds still retain harmonious curves, and so many breezes rubbed against it that it is transparent like the wings of a butterfly.<sup>1</sup>

And the answer he gave is that starting from a material object and the intentional object that overlays it, a historian of art ought to arrive at the subject who summoned the given work of art into being, expressing by this a certain attitude towards the world. In this sense, art history is a *Geistesgeschichte*, or a history of ideas.<sup>2</sup> Ultimately, the work itself becomes transparent, so to speak, even though as such it remains a necessary medium, without which an art historian is unable to reach the spiritual world which is the true subject of his/her enquiry.

[...] the dress acquires beauty and becomes priceless because it loses its materialness, swirling like mist in the imaginary evocation of an eternal dance of long-dead women, whose voices, movements, well-nigh faces can be discerned through the veil of delicate silk worn away by the air.<sup>3</sup>

concludes Juszczak.

It would not be too much of an overstatement to say that art history as proposed by Juszczak is “idealistic” in its character. This adjective here is intended only to indicate that in a historical interpretation, the material aspect must be transcended, even if this aspect is a *conditio sine qua non* of

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1 W. Juszczak, “Dzieło sztuki czy fakt historyczny?” [A Work of Art or a Historical Fact?], in: idem, *Wędrówka do źródeł* [A Journey to the Sources], Gdańsk, 2009, p. 55.

2 Ibid., p. 69.

3 Ibid., p. 70.

that transcendence and at the same time it offers access to whatever opens before a scholar as a result of that transcendence. For this reason, a historian of art cannot, of course, remain indifferent to the material aspect of a work; but neither can he limit himself to the description, attribution and the technical, stylistic and formal analysis of this work, or to his/her own aesthetic experience that is aroused by it.

Wiesław Juszczak's essay – published, let it be recalled, in the year 1973 – focuses on several topics that constitute the core of present-day historiographic reflection, e.g. issues of the (re)construction of the past, the “historical outlook” and the “historical experience”; as a result, it is still thoroughly up-to-date. One theme is particularly interesting, however, i.e. the one directly connected with the “idealism” of art history as postulated by the author and with the way in which the material aspect of a work of art functions within that idealism. In the last two decades, this very topic has aroused considerable scholarly interest. This concerns the idea of the agency of objects, including works of art, as associated with materialness. Anticipating the present-day debates, Wiesław Juszczak explicitly denies them the possession of agency:

We say that some painting, some sculpture, a piece of clothing, a ring or a pitcher have “their history”. We repeat this so often that finally we forget about the metaphorical nature of this expression, about the fact that it anthropomorphises objects which last in time, but do not actively participate in it and are, in fact, exempt from its laws. Which means: they are not possessed of the capability to act; they can only affect by means of external impulses; they only accept marks of damage and they patiently and passively yield to transformations. Each of them constitutes – of course – a testimony of the past; but none of them is an “actor”.<sup>4</sup>

The above passage is worth noting not only because it constitutes a starting point for the author's formulation of the “idealistic” programme of art history and, more broadly, of the humanities, as a scholarly investigation of spirit; a programme that is threatened by the contemporary notion of the “agency of things”. This is worth noting also because it aptly expresses the views of today's opponents of the theory which treats objects as actors or actants and which ascribes to them the capability for action understood differently than in a purely metaphorical way.

My point here is not to declare myself on either one or the other side of that debate. This is because there exists an area which is a concern of art history, even though it is so autonomous that it is not longer being associated with art history. And with regard to that particular area, Wiesław Juszczak's view seems problematical. In addition, in order to notice this, one does not need to be an advocate of, for instance, the actor-network theory: the problems become evident in the variously comprehended practice.

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4 Ibid., p. 55.

This area is the history of gardens. It must be immediately stressed that, in writing his essay, Wiesław Juszczak did not consider gardens; they were never his scholarly concern. Also the authors to whom he addressed his polemic understood art as painting, sculpture or architecture (i.e. architecture excluding landscape architecture). Yet if we agree that gardens are works of art, then their examination that would be consistent with the “idealism” postulated by Juszczak indeed constitutes a problem. Of course such a perspective (which, actually, dominates in the study of gardens in the historical perspective, which focuses on the broadly understood meanings of gardens) is justified by the fact that gardens are usually analysed through visual or written sources, owing to which they acquire a status similar to theirs, at least regarding the relation of the matter (medium) vs. the spirit (idea) that governs them; as a result they are perceived as *sui generis* representations, while their examination – as an attempt to grasp what exactly is represented by them. Yet the very “garden medium” (if we may indeed use such a term) resists this kind of “idealistic” interpretation of these very peculiar works of art that gardens are.

The peculiar nature of this medium was perceptively described by, for instance, Jan Bogdanowski:

In no other art but the art of gardens does the continuity of change amount to its form. Apart from an ostensible permanence – because, once planted, it persists in its general shape – a garden entails constant changeability, not only from year to year, but even from season to season, not to mention the shifting moods of the dawn and twilight hours.

An edifice built of stone or brick may persist for centuries in a relatively unchanged shape. Planting a garden, in contrast, is just the starting point of its development as an organism whose subsequent forms only partially depend on the creator’s intentions. [...] After years or even centuries have passed, those who visit beautiful old gardens and parks are often hard put to guess which elements have resulted from the creator’s intentions and which are the work of nature. [...] Meticulous care will not only not preserve the atmosphere of the [green] interiors, but will actually always follow their transformations.

This is because a garden is a living composition. Just as its components, the trees, shrubs and flowers, are alive. Or even more: these living elements seem to impart a kind of a life on the unavoidably lifeless artefacts united with them in one whole, i.e. works of architecture, sculpture and engineering. [...]

Once planted, a garden retains its “personality”; but constant change is a feature of this personality.<sup>5</sup>

There are at least two areas in which the problematic nature of the “idealistic” perception of a garden is particularly evident. One area is the process of experiencing a garden; the other concerns the issues of conservation and restoration of historical gardens.

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5 J. Bogdanowski, *Polskie ogrody ozdobne: historia i problemy rewaloryzacji* [Polish Decorative Gardens: History and Reconstruction Issues], Warsaw, 2000, p. 8.

Experiencing a garden means not only the process of deciphering its meanings, but also, or above all, the fact of being in it: walking around it, looking at it, savouring its atmosphere.<sup>6</sup> This is because a garden is chiefly an environment in which the visitor remains immersed<sup>7</sup> – and although this environment is man-made, it is concurrently natural. And it is nature that constitutes the fundamental source of pleasure afforded by gardens, which Bernard Berenson aptly expressed when he wrote: “I have a garden too unless it pours with rain, I run through it at least once a day, to taste the air, to listen to the sound of birds and streams, to admire flowers and trees”.<sup>8</sup>

When understood in this way, the experience of a garden is to a greater or lesser extent accessible to all those who find themselves in it, including historians of art; but the historians would tend to eliminate this experience, as all too obvious, from their reflections. The atmosphere of a garden, which results from the way it affects the senses, is a subject that is usually placed outside the range of their considerations, or it may be considered as a type of *topos* presented in the literature or art. The Italian historian of gardens, Francesco Fariello, is quite right in observing:

A garden may offer various levels of pleasure, depending on what is required of it. A basic sensitivity to forms, colours and natural elements suffices to obtain a simple sensorial or sentimental pleasure. But an ideational approach, which transforms the garden into a world intended for contemplation, is necessary to obtain an intellectual or aesthetic pleasure. This, in turn, implies a creative process, the same as with any work of art.<sup>9</sup>

Every time, however, this sensorialness is transcended, because the history of gardens provides pleasure of a higher order. This suggests an analogy to how an parallel experience – one that might be called an aesthetic experience in the broad sense, i.e. a sensual experience – is only parenthetically referred to by scholars with regard to e.g. paintings, with the result that the source of this experience, i.e. the materialness of the painting, is taken as transparent.<sup>10</sup> What distinguishes gardens from traditional works of art is the fact that their sensorialness and materialness far more strongly impinge on the visitor. The reason for this is the fact that even if the greenery is used as a carrier of spiritual meanings, the influence of its material presence and its sensorial

6 Cf. R. Assunto, *Ontologia e teleologia del giardino*, Milan, 2009; the conception of atmosphere, also with respect to gardens, is developed by G. Böhme, *Natürlich Natur. Über Natur im Zeitalter ihrer technischen Reproduzierbarkeit*, Frankfurt-am-Main, 1992.

7 Cf. A. Berleant, *The Aesthetics of Environment*, Philadelphia, 1992.

8 Quoted after: R. T. Schnadellbach, *Hidden Lives / Secret Gardens: The Florentine Villas Gamberaia, La Pietra and I Tatti*, New York–Bloomington, 2009, p. 242.

9 F. Fariello, *Architettura dei giardini*, Rome, 1967, s. 3.

10 Various attempts are made to focus scholarly attention on the non-transparent materialness of paintings, cf. G. Didi-Huberman, *Devant l'image. Questions posées aux fins d'une histoire de l'art*, Paris, 1990.

aspect is inescapable; this influence can be so strong, in fact, that the spiritual content may be entirely obscured. This aspect is all the more evident when the garden is not so much a place which a person visits or comes to sightsee, but a place which he or she cultivates. What comes to the fore in this case is an aspect that is inseparably connected with the materialness of its medium: the fact that this medium is alive, i.e. subject chiefly to its own, biological rules, and not to human intentions.

In fact, almost all of literature that is devoted to gardening, from ancient times until the present day, takes this fact under consideration, advising how to cultivate plants, i.e. how to guarantee conditions favourable to their growth, on the one hand, and on the other – how to achieve the desired effect by making use of what these plants can offer. In this sense, cultivating a garden, regardless of the accepted stylistics and the intended meanings, is a human activity that relies on adjusting to the actions of nature or on overcoming them, even though those actions, of course, differ in their character from the actions undertaken by human beings. Wiesław Juszczak is correct in observing that “the term ‘natural history’ went out of use most probably due to the transformations which the meaning of the word ‘history’ has undergone”,<sup>11</sup> as history began to be linked solely with human actions; it seems, however, that the history of gardens is one area where this term should be brought back into use.

Also, in his analysis of the meaning of the term “history”, Juszczak notes that

if [art history] is history and its subject is the investigation of works of art, it is the history of works of art. In this expression, the word ‘history’ acquires an equally metaphorical sense as in the expression ‘natural history’; this is because the focus of our interest in it is not action but continuation; because we are absorbed in what has been left of the past; what has been preserved and to what extent it is “authentic”, unchanged – preserved for us, not for our knowledge of the people who lived before our time.<sup>12</sup>

Hence, works of art have a history only in a metaphorical sense, because, let us quote Juszczak again, they “last in time, but do not actively participate in it and are, in fact, exempt from its laws”. Since we consider gardens to be works of art, we should also accept that they, too, are exempt from the laws of time and, as a result, that we may only speak of their history in a metaphorical sense.

We might wonder, however, whether with reference to gardens it is truly not possible to speak of history in the literal sense. Not only because, like any work, they are a result of human actions, but also because their persistence relies on being embedded in time, not on being “exempt from its laws”. As Francesco Fariello points out, gardens – in contrast to architecture, painting

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11 W. Juszczak, op. cit., p. 53.

12 Ibid., p. 63.

or sculpture, at least in the traditional perception – do not persist despite time, but thanks to it:

Gardens occupy a special place among the arts, [...] side by side with architecture, sculpture and painting, all of which are located [...] almost outside time. Since they are subject to the natural laws of growth and change, they are situated between art and nature, between the eternalness of immutable marble and the volatility of the shifting natural scenery. In this respect, the art of gardens is quite close to music, which expresses itself somewhere between the permanence of conception and the transitory directness of sound.<sup>13</sup>

Originally, Wiesław Juszcak's essay entitled *Dzieło sztuki czy fakt historyczny?* was published in a volume devoted to Ksawery Piwocki, which explains e.g. his reference to Alois Riegl's theory of *Kunstwollen*. Riegl's reflections, which were connected with the idea of "that which desires art" and focused on issues of conservation and restoration of works of art, illuminate the peculiar temporariness of a garden (even though Riegl himself was not concerned with gardens). As is generally known, Riegl proposed a typology of the values of historical monuments; foremost among them is the age value (*Alteswert*), which arises from the fact that a monument in its material aspect conveys traces of the period that passed from its making until the moment in which it is being viewed.<sup>14</sup> These traces induce the viewer to think about the passing of time and about the inexorability of the laws of nature which destroy man-made things. According to Riegl, a historical monument is an area of tension between various values, with the foreground occupied by the inescapable conflict between the age value and the historical value originating from the fact that a given relic is a testimony to its maker, his age etc.; in brief – the spirit. The conflict arises because the age value by nature cancels the historical value, and the other way round. In this approach,

13 Fariello, op. cit., p. 4.

14 Alois Riegl, *Georg Dehio i kult zabytków* [Alois Riegl, Georg Dehio and the Cult of Monuments], ed. and transl. by R. Kasperowicz, Warsaw, 2002; cf. also J. Krawczyk, "Teoria Aloisa Riegla i jej polska recepcja a problemy konserwatorstwa współczesnego" [Alois Riegl's Theory and its Reception in Poland in the Light of Modern-day Issues in Conservation], in: *Współczesne problemy teorii konserwatorskiej w Polsce* [Current Issues in Conservation Theory in Poland], ed. B. Szmygin, Lublin, 2008, pp. 63–74; idem, "Przedmiot i podmiot działalności konserwatorskiej w świetle poglądów Aloisa Riegla" [Subject and Object of Conservation in the Light of Riegl's Views], in: *Wobec zabytku. Tradycje i perspektywy postaw. Studia dedykowane pamięci prof. Jerzego Remera* [In the Face of a Monument. Traditions and Perspectives of Approaches. Commemorative Studies Dedicated to Prof. Jerzy Remer], ed. E. Pilecka, J. Raczkowski, Toruń, 2010, pp. 109–120; B. Rymaszewski, "Refleksje o rieglowskiej wartości zabytkowej" [Reflections on Riegl's Monumental Quality], in: *Conservatio est aetherna creatio. Księga dedykowana prof. Janowi Tajchmanowi* [Studies Dedicated to Prof. Jan Tajchman], ed. J. Krawczyk, Toruń, 1999, pp. 77–83; N. Talley, *Historical and Philosophical Issues in the Conservation of Cultural Heritage*, Los Angeles, 1996, p. 18 ff.

time turns out to be “external” in relation to the monument, the latter having a timeless character. The passage of time results thus in a deviation from an optimum; monuments, to use Juszcak’s phrase, “accept marks of damage and patiently and passively yield to transformations”, which in the end may result in the cessation of their material existence. This is the source of the need to conserve historical relics.

We may apply the age value in reference to gardens, too. The superiority and charm of an old garden or park results from the fact that it is ancient. Here, however, the garden’s age does not mean the process of deviating from some “ideal” point, because time is not a stream that washes the garden and wears it away in the way the ancient dress is worn away by “breezes” that have rubbed against it. But for the passage of time, which allows the plants to grow and bloom, but also to wither and die, the gardens would not exist. In this context, the passing time not only ravages and destroys, but also contributes to transformations which, dictated by the dynamic nature of the garden medium, are not enforced from the outside, but surge from the inside. Time is therefore something that flows inside the garden, and gardens are works of art of a spatiotemporal nature. And the measure of the passage of time (hence: of the given garden’s age value) is the greenery in its material aspect.

As a result, the relation between the age value of a garden and its historical quality is different than in the other arts, even though it is still the tension between these two aspects that constitutes the fundamental problem in garden conservation and restoration theory. On the one hand, the passage of time does not threaten the material annihilation of a garden, but it does result in the fact that a garden may to some extent cease to be itself and eventually grow wild, transforming into some kind of “untamed” nature where the original intention would no longer be discernible. On the other hand, however, there is the far more problematic issue of authenticity, which for Riegl was linked with the age value. In the case of a garden, it is not connected with the immutability of substance, which is usually assumed (also by Wiesław Juszcak) to be a necessary condition.

A few decades ago, Ksawery Piwocki, whose thought was influenced by that of Alois Riegl (for instance, he considered Riegl’s *Denkmalkultus* to be the “fullest and broadest presentation of the fundamentals of conservation methods from the point of view of their scholarly and philosophical, not technical assumptions”<sup>15</sup>) wrote:

The power and the might of a work of art lives in its material substance, in the expressiveness of its form dispersed into the morphemes of its substance; the destruction of this substance, therefore, destroys the most profound meaning of the work of art and

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15 K. Piwocki, “Substancja zabytku” [The Substance of a Monument], in: idem, *Sztuka żywa: szkice z teorii i metodyki historii sztuki* [Living Art. Sketches from the Theory and Methodology of Art History], Wrocław, 1970, p. 272.



transforms a still-living message from our forefathers, a message that defies their death, into an empty shape, no more than a shadow of the authentic thing; into a tombstone set up in the place of a living.<sup>16</sup>

Piwocki was strongly opposed to the practice of replacing originals with reconstructions, comparing such attempts to the behaviour of a historian of art who, having conducted “a brilliant interpretation of a work of art, feels entitled to destroying this work; for why should it continue to exist, when its meaning has been unveiled and its sense deciphered”.<sup>17</sup> In the case of gardens, obviously, the issue of reconstruction is different than in the case of, for instance, architecture. Nevertheless, it is precisely the issue of reconstructing gardens – and, following it, the problem of how the substance of a garden should be approached – that gave rise to an interesting debate, in which theoretical arguments were intertwined with practical considerations. At stake was, in essence, the status to be accorded to greenery; whether it should be treated solely as the medium serving to carry out a certain conception and hence as being passively receptive to spiritual content or, conversely, whether it must be viewed as a medium capable of action, independent of the cultural universe and hence materially contributing to the creation of a given garden.

This was a battle between two approaches, of which one might be deemed “idealistic” and the other “materialistic”. Both terms are, of course, arbitrary, because both perspectives are idealistic and materialistic at the same time, since they both agree that the conservation and restoration of a garden must be carried out with the original design, i.e. an ideal element, in mind, and that this is a thoroughly material procedure. The divergence between them arises from the differences in emphasis.

Although the practice of garden conservation and restoration goes back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was only relatively recently that it acquired separate theoretical guidelines. The Florence Charter, which partially separated the area of historical garden conservation from architectural conservation, was signed only in the year 1981. A debate concerning the theoretical foundations of this area arose while work on this charter was being carried out within the framework of the ICOMOS; the bone of contention was precisely the issue of the materialness of a garden. As a result, the Italian specialists drafted their own charter. Their position at the time practically set the direction in which the Italian school of garden conservation has been going ever since. Even a cursory comparison of the two documents is worth making because, although they essentially focus on practical issues, they both have a theoretical undertone, even though it is rarely noticed.<sup>18</sup> In addition, although the Italian

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 277.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 276.

<sup>18</sup> Polish specialist literature concerning garden conservation is considerable, but mostly technical (cf. L. Majdecki, *Ochrona i konserwacja zabytkowych założeń ogrodowych* [The



*votum separatum* was largely local and seems to be virtually unknown outside Italy, it concerns a fundamental issue which is present in the entire conservation/restoration discourse in relation to gardens.

The Florence Charter opens with the following definition: “A historic garden is an architectural and horticultural composition of interest to the public from the historical or artistic point of view. As such, it is to be considered as a monument” (art. 1).<sup>19</sup> The following article states that the historic garden is “an architectural composition whose constituents are primarily vegetal and therefore living, which means that they are perishable and renewable. Thus its appearance reflects the perpetual balance between the cycle of the seasons, the growth and decay of nature and the desire of the artist and craftsman to keep it permanently unchanged” (art. 2). Also, the Charter defines the areas in which the authenticity of the garden should be guaranteed as far as possible, namely the design, decorative features, and the choice of plant or inorganic materials (art. 9). Yet the point which aroused the greatest protest of the Italian experts concerned the restoration or reconstruction of historic gardens:

Article 16. Restoration work must respect the successive stages of evolution of the garden concerned. In principle, no one period should be given precedence over any other, except in exceptional cases where the degree of damage or destruction affecting certain parts of a garden may be such that it is decided to reconstruct it on the basis of the traces that survive or of unimpeachable documentary evidence. Such reconstruction work might be undertaken more particularly on the parts of the garden nearest to the building it contains in order to bring out their significance in the design.

The issue that was most hotly contested by the Italian experts was reconstruction. As a result, before the year was over they had proposed their own Charter on Historic Gardens. The decisions contained in the two documents are in many respects very similar, especially with regard to the definition of a garden. The Italian Charter reads:

A historic garden [...] represents a polymatteric ensemble [...] which, like any other asset, constitutes a limited, perishable, unrepeatable *unicum* which has its own devel-

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Protection and Conservation of Historic Garden Complexes], Warsaw, 2003; the introduction, pp. 13–26, is theoretical; cf. also D. Sikora, *Konserwacja ogrodów regularnych XVII i XVIII w.* [Conservation of 17<sup>th</sup>- and 18<sup>th</sup>-century Regular Gardens], Warsaw, 2011, esp. pp. 21–42 (the author points to Riegl’s role in garden conservation); the Florence Charter is treated similarly, cf. A. Zachariasz, “Zabytkowe ogrody – problemy rewitalizacji, utrzymania i zarządzania w świetle zaleceń Karty Florenckiej” [Historic Gardens. The Problems of Restoration, Maintenance and Management in the Light of the Florence Charter Recommendations], *Prace Komisji Krajobrazu Kulturowego*, 2008, no. 10, pp. 150–161.

<sup>19</sup> The document is available at [http://www.icomos.org/charters/gardens\\_e.pdf](http://www.icomos.org/charters/gardens_e.pdf) [accessed 29 Oct. 2015].

opment process, its own history (birth, growth, change, degradation) that reflects the society and culture that have created, built, used and in any way been related to it.<sup>20</sup>

But the authors of this Charter fully rejected the idea of reconstruction:

Therefore, every operation that tends to give priority to an individual stage acquired at a certain historic period and re-create it *ex novo* ignoring posterior phases would take away from its richness and would be reductive and decidedly anti-historic. Any intervention must therefore be identified as an intervention aiming at conservation and must be guaranteed to extend over time in a process of a continuous, programmed, well-timed maintenance.<sup>21</sup>

Later, they proposed that all statements allowing restitution, also the ones cited above, be removed from the Florence Charter.<sup>22</sup>

The abhorrence of any idea of reconstructing a garden springs from the conviction that such an intervention overlooks the fact that the special nature of gardens results from their medium, which is a living one and as such carries on its own existence – and that this existence must be respected and taken under consideration as an important element of the theory and practice of conservation, and not only as a certain obvious fact which, in essence, constitutes a purely technical difficulty that can be satisfactorily overcome. The Italian theoreticians of garden conservation offer a number of pertinent arguments, but, most generally, these can be reduced to the thesis that nature acts in a garden (with the stipulation that this action must be taken literally), and that the maintenance of a historic garden ought to amount to cooperating with nature.

A garden is sometimes compared to an open work.<sup>23</sup> This is because gardens are works of art which do not have a single, set form that would constitute a point of reference. The fact that they have a temporal nature does not mean, therefore, that they need time to acquire that form and that they then inevitably lose it, unless a human keeper intervenes. The point is that such an original or optimal form is impossible to determine in the first place. In this, gardens are very different from traditional arts. The role of a gar-

20 *Tutela dei giardini storici. Bilanci e prospettive*, a cura di V. Cazzato, Rome, 1989.

21 *Ibid.*, pp. 106–107.

22 Records of the Italian debates and various approaches to this issue can be found in: *Tutela dei giardini storici*, op. cit.; *Giardini storici. A 25 anni dalle Carte di Firenze: esperienze e prospettive*, a cura di Laura Sabrina Pelisetti, Lionella Scazzosi, Florence, 2009; cf. also: V. Cazzato, “Verso una Carta del restauro dei giardini storici”, in: *Giardini italiani. Note di storia e di conservazione*, a cura di Ufficio Studi del Ministero per i Beni Culturali e Ambientali, Rome, 1981, pp. 137–144; idem, “Il dibattito su restauro e conservazione dei giardini storici”, *Arte dei giardini*, 1991, no. 1, pp. 13–15; L. Scazzosi, *Il giardino opera aperta. La conservazione delle architetture vegetali*, Florence, 1993, pp. 57–71; M. Pozzana, *Giardini storici. Principi e tecniche della conservazione*, Florence, 1996, p. 17 ff.; M. A. Giusti, *Restauro dei giardini. Teorie e storia*, Florence, 2004, pp. 175–192.

23 L. Scazzosi, op. cit.

dener or designer involves designing a certain process and creating a general framework in which definite, albeit sometimes unforeseeable, events are to unfold.<sup>24</sup> In this approach, nature is treated as the garden's co-author in a literal sense.

The less radical approach means treating the garden in the manner indicated by the already quoted Francesco Fariello, i.e. as a *sui generis* "musical composition having its fixed structure recorded in the score, a structure which is endlessly repeated in diverse ways, although at the same time it remains the same work that was originally composed".<sup>25</sup>

One way or another, a garden is viewed as a palimpsest, whose successive layers are produced as much by man as by nature. According to the Italian conservators, however, it is impossible to definitely and entirely remove those layers, regardless of their character, in an attempt to recreate some ideal shape. What is more, conservation intervention is nothing more than the act of adding another layer to the palimpsest of a garden. Alois Riegl is cited as the spiritual father of this approach<sup>26</sup>; it is also often emphasised that this approach appreciates vegetal matter as having its own intrinsic value, which is independent from the historical or artistic value of the garden. This approach, in turn, is contrasted with the view that the most important are the form of the garden and the meanings it conveys.<sup>27</sup> Also, the conviction that inspires, at least partially, the above approaches, according to which the garden's authenticity lies in its matter, originates from Riegl's thought. All of this led the Italian conservators to the conclusion that the best method of restoration is conservation, understood as routine, day-to-day maintenance.<sup>28</sup> In fact, the notion that a garden, consisting as it does of living matter, should be restored in the same way as, for instance, traditional architecture is restored, is sometimes considered to be impossible to carry out in practice, in the same way it is not possible to recreate a vanished community of people united by shared practices.<sup>29</sup>

It has also often been pointed out that the term 'conservation' more decisively underlines the fact that all the phases the garden went through in order to survive up to our times are recognised and acknowledged; that

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24 A. Bellini, "Difficoltà teoriche nel restauro dei giardini storici", in: *Il giardino e il tempo. Conservazione e manutenzione delle architetture vegetali*, a cura di M. Boriani e L. Scazzosi, Milan, 1992, pp. 9–10.

25 M. Pozzana, op. cit., p. 22.

26 L. Scazzosi, op. cit., pp. 228–231; M. Dezzi Bardeschi, "La Carta dei giardini storici otto anni dopo", in: *Tutela dei giardini storici. Bilanci e prospettive*, op. cit., pp. 195–205.

27 M. A. Giusti, op. cit., p. 10.

28 A. Rinaldi, "Un falso problema: il restauro dei giardini storici", in: *Tutela dei giardini storici. Bilanci e prospettive*, op. cit., pp. 237–248; conservation is also mentioned by L. Majdecki, op. cit., pp. 24–26.

29 F. Agostoni, "Il restauro di un complesso storico", in: *Tutela dei giardini storici. Bilanci e prospettive*, op. cit., p. 142.

it expresses the will to refrain from interventions aimed at a “return to the past” or a reconstruction of what is already lost.<sup>30</sup> In addition, conservation perceived as permanent and day-to-day maintenance makes it possible to preserve the dynamic character of the garden; in fact, it co-creates this dynamics by attempting to keep the spontaneous action of nature in balance with the desired form of the garden. It also guarantees the garden’s survival, because it constitutes a continuation of its cultivation. Hence, conservation is presented as a practice which has a material dimension, and thus underlines the materialness of the garden, but which at the same time allows the non-material meanings to contribute their share.<sup>31</sup> So, a garden’s authenticity to a great extent derives from the material persistence of greenery, which despite its mutability always remains the same. Yet a garden’s authenticity may also derive from the continuity of practices performed therein. The fundamental practice is, of course, the very cultivation of the garden; hence conservation (understood as continuous cultivation of the garden before it turned historic, i.e. before it acquired the value of a historical monument) promotes authenticity; not so restoration, which constitutes an act of breaking this continuity. Also, conservation does not exclude replacing plants, just as cultivation itself does not exclude it; yet the process of replacing serves only to maintain continuity. In this we must be aware that the replacements, inevitable as they are, remove us further and further away from the original form of the garden (if we assume that it may be determined) and that each successive “incarnation” is only a copy of a copy of a copy.<sup>32</sup> Consequently, it is impossible to return a garden to its original form.<sup>33</sup>

To conclude, one more point must be noted – all of the above contributions to the debate cite the fact that the garden medium is dynamic and naturally mutable, as justification of the special approach to garden conservation. Yet a number of scholars point out, correctly, that this argumentation relies on an erroneous assumption that the works of other arts are static. In reality, every work of art undergoes natural changes; only the tempo of these changes is far slower than in the case of gardens. The difference between gardens and other works of art is thus a difference of quantity, not of quality.<sup>34</sup> Nevertheless,

30 M. Pozzana, op. cit., p. 153.

31 M. A. Giusti, “La dimensione contemporanea del giardino: esperienza cognitiva e creativa”, in: *Giardini storici. A 25 anni dalle Carte di Firenze: esperienze e prospettive*, p. 266.

32 P. Petrarola, “Riflessioni sul restauro dei giardini storici”, in: *Tutela dei giardini storici. Bilanci e prospettive*, op. cit., pp. 174–177; R. Bonelli, “Giardini storici: necessità di una teoria”, in: *Tutela dei giardini storici. Bilanci e prospettive*, op. cit., pp. 178–183; G. Carbonara, “Problemi di restauro dei giardini storico-artistici”, in: *Tutela dei giardini storici. Bilanci e prospettive*, op. cit., pp. 184–194.

33 A similar view is expressed by e.g. D. Likhachov, *Poezja ogrodów* [Poetics of the Gardens], transl. K. N. Sakowicz, Warsaw, 1991, pp. 319–323.

34 M. Boriani, “Quale restauro per le ‘architetture vegetali’? Problemi di tutela, conservazione e gestione di un patrimonio vivente”, in: *Il giardino e il tempo*, op. cit., pp. 15–24;

we may assume that in this case the difference of quantity transmutes into the difference of quality and that in this context, a garden's quality of anti-queeness differs from the quality of antiqueness of, for example, "ordinary" architecture. But this difference does not entail a divergence; hence we may assume that the conservation of gardens is an area which enables us to examine the theory of the conservation of non-gardens "from the point of view of [...] scholarly and philosophical, not technical assumptions".

A scholar who accentuates the materialness of gardens, and thus also their dynamic and not entirely controllable character, incurs the risk of being accused of reducing the role of their "ideal" element.<sup>35</sup> Gardens are products of culture, because "nature does not plant gardens";<sup>36</sup> consequently, it is impossible to ignore their spiritual dimension, i.e. to take no notice of the fact that they are the product of human actions aimed at reaching predefined goals. Yet this is the place to ask whether gardens are not, by any chance, works of art which do not allow us to ponder the issue of materialness in the first place, because they display their medium more strongly than the other arts with which they are traditionally compared. This is because gardens are like dresses worn to a dance – it is true that they are set into a swirling motion by the dancer, but their folds curve harmoniously regardless of her will and not always in the rhythm of the dance, sometimes veiling the dancer herself.

(Translated by Klaudyna Michałowicz)

## Abstract

The article discusses Wiesław Juszczak's essay entitled *Dzieło sztuki czy fakt historyczny?* [A work of art or a historical fact? (1973)], which focuses on his theses on the material dimension of artworks. Claiming that Juszczak's point of view is mainly idealistic, the author shows that such a perspective is highly debatable when historic gardens are concerned. The controversy is illustrated by an analysis of the Italian debate over the Florence Charter, an ICOMOS document on the preservation of historic gardens (1981).

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F. Borsi, "Il restauro dei giardini storici: problemi di metodo", in: *Tutela dei giardini storici. Bilanci e prospettive*, op. cit., pp. 159–163; A. Bellini, "Il dibattito sui giardini storici: equivoci e acquisizioni", in: *Tutela dei giardini storici. Bilanci e prospettive*, op. cit., pp. 164–173.

35 Cf. e.g. G. Hajòs, "Three Dangers to the Theory and Practice of Historic Garden Preservation in the Last 25 Years (In German-Speaking Countries)", in: *Giardini storici. A 25 anni dalle Carte di Firenze: esperienze e prospettive*, op. cit., pp. 207–226; G. Ciołek, L. Majdecki or J. Bogdanowicz seems to have shared this view (cf. D. Sikora, op. cit.).

36 Quoted after: R. Pechère, *Grammaire des jardins: secrets de métier*, Bruxelles, 2002, p. 15.