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## PLINY THE YOUNGER'S VILLA LAURENTINA AS VIEWED BY COUNT STANISLAS KOSTKA POTOCKI: BETWEEN 18<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY ARCHAEOLOGY AND A NEOCLASSICAL VISION

COUNT STANISLAS KOSTKA POTOCKI (1755-1821), one of the most distinguished Poles of the Enlightenment period, is known outside his native country mainly thanks to the life-sized equestrian portrait of him painted by Jacques-Louis David in 1780-1781. His achievements include at least two of international importance: his *Lettre d'un étranger sur le Salon de 1787*<sup>1</sup> and, more notably, his paper reconstruction of Pliny the Younger's villa, which once stood on the seashore at Laurentum, not far from Ostia.

The reconstruction, based on one of Pliny's letters, resulted in over thirty large colour drawings (57.7 x 89.5 cm) executed in Rome in the years 1777-78, under Potocki's guidance, by a group of artists. Among them were two Italians – Giuseppe Manocchi (died 1782) and Vincenzo Brenna (1747-1818) and, most probably, a Pole – Franciszek Smuglewicz (1745-1807), who lived in Rome in the years 1763-84. All the drawings are in the Department of Iconographic Collections at the National Library of Warsaw.<sup>2</sup> Already in the 19<sup>th</sup> century they were mounted into two large albums, one entitled *Villa de Pline le jeune ditt Laurentina*, and the other, *Intérieure de*

1] See POTOCKI 1787; a copy of this rare publication is preserved in The Czartoryski Library in Kraków. See ŻMIJEWSKA 1977, pp. 344-353.

2] All of them are reproduced in De la Ruffière du Prey 1994, pp. 148ff., and MIZIOŁEK 2007.

*la Villa de Pline le jeune par Brenna*. Most of them are of great beauty and provide the most extensive reconstruction of the villa ever produced. In connection with this set of drawings, in the late 1790s, Potocki produced a twenty-four page manuscript entitled *Notes et Idées sur la Villa de Pline*, which was intended to serve as an accompanying commentary.<sup>3</sup> However, like the drawings, the commentary was never published.

The drawings have already been investigated to a certain extent by the late Stanislas Lorentz, and in more depth by Pierre de la Ruffinière du Prey, who concentrated mainly on the architectural forms of the Laurentina according to Potocki's vision. Nevertheless, the problem of the villa's decoration with paintings, sculptures, mosaics and *opus sectile* have still to be researched. The present writer has already published a preliminary paper in English on this subject, and also a book in Polish, which is a quasi catalogue of an exhibition held in the National Library, Warsaw, that contains all the drawings from the two aforementioned albums and the *Notes*.<sup>4</sup> In both publications it is argued that the best drawings for the Laurentina project were executed by Manocchi and that Potocki's paper reconstruction of Pliny's villa includes thirty-two drawings, whereas De la Ruffinière du Prey was of the opinion that only twenty-three drawings were used.<sup>5</sup> The main scope of this paper is to show the impact of 18th century archaeological investigations and archaeological books on Potocki's reconstruction.

#### STANISLAS KOSTKA POTOCKI IN ITALY, AND THE LAURENTINA IN THE LIGHT OF THE *NOTES AND IDEAS ON PLINY'S VILLA*

Count Stanislas Kostka Potocki was educated in the Collegium Nobilium in Warsaw and, in the years 1772-5, he studied architecture, geography, literature and history at the Royal Academy of Turin.<sup>6</sup> He then went on a two-year Grand Tour to visit Italy's cultural centres: Venice, Verona, Florence, and more importantly Rome, Naples, the towns around Vesuvius, and Sicily.<sup>7</sup> While in Rome he met Giovanni Battista Piranesi and saw, among other archaeological sites, the *Domus Aurea* where Smuglewicz and Brenna were producing drawings for Ludovico Mirri's book *Le antiche Terme di Tito*

3] An English translation of this text was published for the first time by MIZIOLEK 2006, pp. 33-37. Some fragments are cited by DE LA RUFFIERE DU PREY 1994, pp. 148 and 163.

4] See MIZIOLEK 2006 and MIZIOLEK 2007.

5] For Manocchi, as yet little studied Italian artist who also worked for Robert Adam, see MIZIOLEK 2006, pp. 25-33. See also Stillman 1966, pp. 42-43 and 54. Numerous drawings, once in the collection of Robert Adam are now in John Soane's Museum in London; some of them are reproduced in MIZIOLEK 2007, figs. 54-57, 94, 99 and 104.

6] There is no biography of the Count, see DE LA RUFFINIÈRE DU PREY 1994, pp. 148ff.; Grand Tour 2006, *passim* and "Potocki, Stanisław K." by A. Bentkowska in the *Dictionary of Art*, vol. 25, 1996, p. 364.

7] Grand Tour 2006, pp. 23-71.

*e loro interne pitture*.<sup>8</sup> It was most probably the murals in the Domus, and the book published in 1776, that served as one of the inspirations for Potocki's reconstruction. In *Notes and Ideas on Pliny's Villa* he wrote:

[...] the Baths of Titus, and so many other monuments scattered throughout Rome and its environs were of no small aid, both in the choice of ancient paintings, ornaments, and mosaics, and in the form of the rooms, whose plans I scrupulously followed.<sup>9</sup>

Already in Turin – or during the Grand Tour – Potocki became an admirer of Johann Joachim Winckelmann, who as we know from his *Geschichte der Kunst des Allertums* and several letters, also planned a book about Pliny's villa.<sup>10</sup> Potocki returned to Italy frequently to the end of the 18th century, e.g. in the years 1777-78, 1779-80, 1785-86 and 1795-97. These visits – to the country he loved so much – were very fruitful. In 1777 he launched the villa project and visited many archaeological sites including Tivoli; in 1780, while in Naples, he ordered from David the famous equestrian portrait; in 1786 he produced a ground plan of Pompeii and took part in successful archaeological excavations at Nola, uncovering numerous Greek (then called Etruscan) vases, and during his last visit he wrote the *Notes*.<sup>11</sup> During these extended stays in Italy he began work on a translation of Winckelmann's *Geschichte der Kunst des Allertums* into Polish; however, Potocki's *The Polish Winckelmann* was published only in 1815.

Either in 1777 or in the 1780s he must have visited the excavations in Castel Fusano (now Castelporziano), in the vicinity of ancient Laurentum, which had been conducted at the beginning of the 18th century and then c.1780. The purpose of the excavations was to uncover the ruins of a spacious villa – known as the Palombara now hidden among trees and bushes, which had a characteristically large peristyle (that is a yard enclosed by columns) as well as a nearby cryptoportico. Notably, a similar cryptoportico and equally large peristyle can be found in the drawings illustrating Potocki's vision of Laurentina (Figs. 1-2).<sup>12</sup> The *Notes* read:

The house described by Pliny in this letter takes its name from Laurentium, a place inhabited and beautified by the Romans, of which only the most insignificant traces remain today. A wretched tavern known as Saint Lorenzo occupies part of the site of the

8] See also Carletti's book of 1776 being a commentary on the murals published by Mirri.

See also PINOT DE VILLECHENON 2002. The earlier exploration of the Domus Aurea by Charles Cameron is discussed in SALMON 1993, pp. 69-93.

9] "Notes and Ideas on Pliny's Villa" in MIZIOEK 2006, p. 12.

10] WINCKELMANN 2006, p. 343; see also p. 74. Winckelmann also refers to the villa in three letters, one of which was sent to Clerisseau at the end of 1767, see WINCKELMANN 1956, p. 345.

11] For the excavations at Nola see DOBROWOLSKI 2007, *passim*.

12] The remnants of the villa at Castelporziano (Castel Fusano) are discussed by LANCIANI 1906, pp. 241ff., and RAMIERI 1995, pp. 407-416.

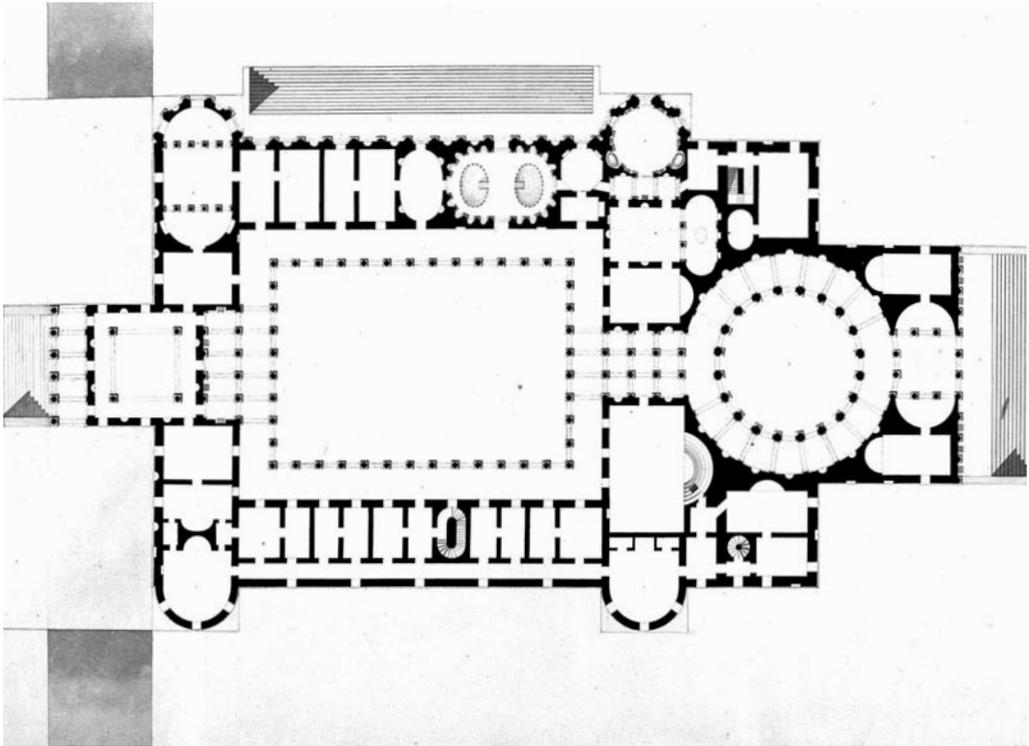


Fig. 1. St. K. Potocki, *Laurentina Villa*, ground plan, (BNW, WAF 67, J. Rys. 5000)

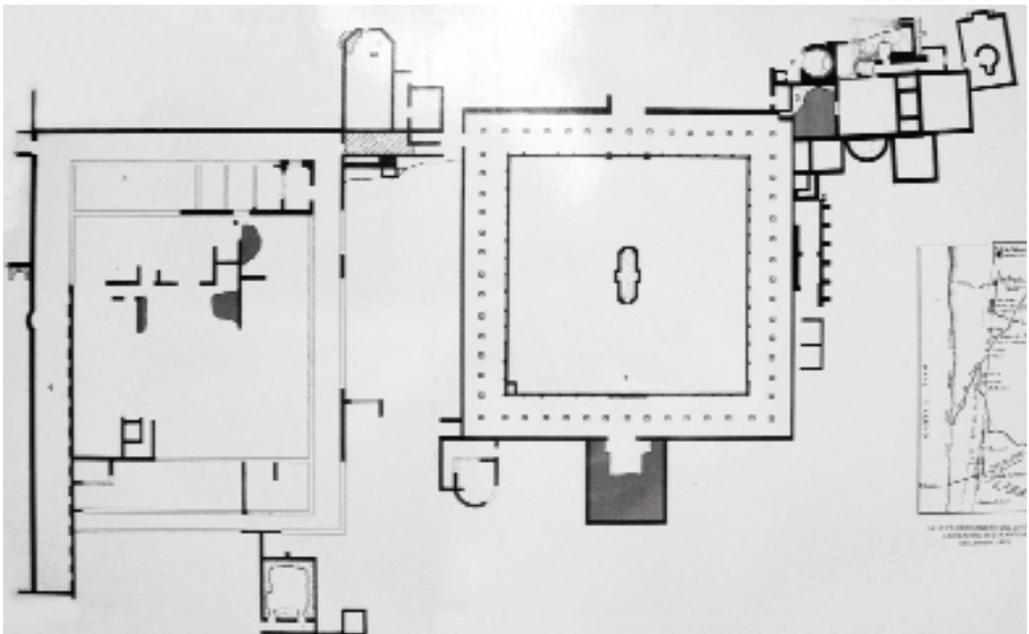


Fig. 2. Ground plan of the so-called La Palombara at Castelporziano

former Laurentum. Not far from there, on the dependencies of the Sacchetti villa, the ruins of Pliny's villa were discovered in 1714. The location of the site, its scope, and the general consensus of the most learned antiquarians leave no doubt about it. It is therefore possible to fix exactly the location where Pliny's country house was built".<sup>13</sup> Thus, both 18th century archaeology and Pliny the Younger's letters paved the way for the paper reconstruction of the villa.

Pliny the Younger (c. 61-113 AD), who was a gifted writer and a high ranking official of the Roman Empire, as well as a close friend of Trajan, refers to his villa in several letters.<sup>14</sup> In one of them, addressed to his friend Gallus (*Letters*, Book II, XVII), he created a sophisticated literary 'portrait' of it.<sup>15</sup> No other villa of the classical era was ever described in such detail. The letter to Gallus provides information not only about the roads leading from Rome to Laurentum and the location of the villa, which was built amid gardens on the seashore; it also gives details of its layout and its many rooms. Pliny refers to Laurentina in several other letters. Of particular interest is his letter to Minicius Fundanus (*Letters*, Book I, IX), which contains the following, somewhat exalted, words:

[...] when I am at Laurentum [...] hopes and fears do not worry me, and I am not bothered by idle talk; I share my thoughts with myself and my books. It is a good life and a genuine one, a seclusion which is happy and honourable, more rewarding than any 'business' can be. The sea and shore are truly my private Helicon, an endless source of inspiration.<sup>16</sup>

Starting with the Renaissance, art lovers, artists and architects used to read this letter when in search of inspiration for their own ventures.<sup>17</sup> Some of them, including Vincenzo Scamozzi (1615), Jean-François Félibien (1695), Robert Castell (1628), Friedrich Krubsacius (1760) and Pedro Marquez (1796), undertook to make paper reconstructions of the villa and the surrounding gardens.<sup>18</sup>

The majority of these are inspired more by the imagination of the maker than by relics of Antiquity. Potocki, who lived in the 'age of archaeology', chose a somewhat different approach, although the ground plan of his Laurentina, with its vast *cavaedium*, is quite similar not only to that of

13] Potocki, Notes in MIZIOŁEK 2006, p. 33.

14] For Pliny's letters concerning his villas see SHERWIN-WHITE 1966, pp. 186-199 and 321-330.

15] PLINY THE YOUNGER 2000: 132-143.

16] This is locus classicus for the terms *otium* (= seclusion) and *negotium* (= affairs). For both terms and their importance in ancient Rome, see ANDRÉ 1966; see also ACKERMAN 1990, pp. 37-39.

17] See CLARKE 2003; WENZEL 2006.

18] All these reconstructions are discussed by PINON and CULOT 1982. See also TANZER 1924 and FÖRTSCH 1993.

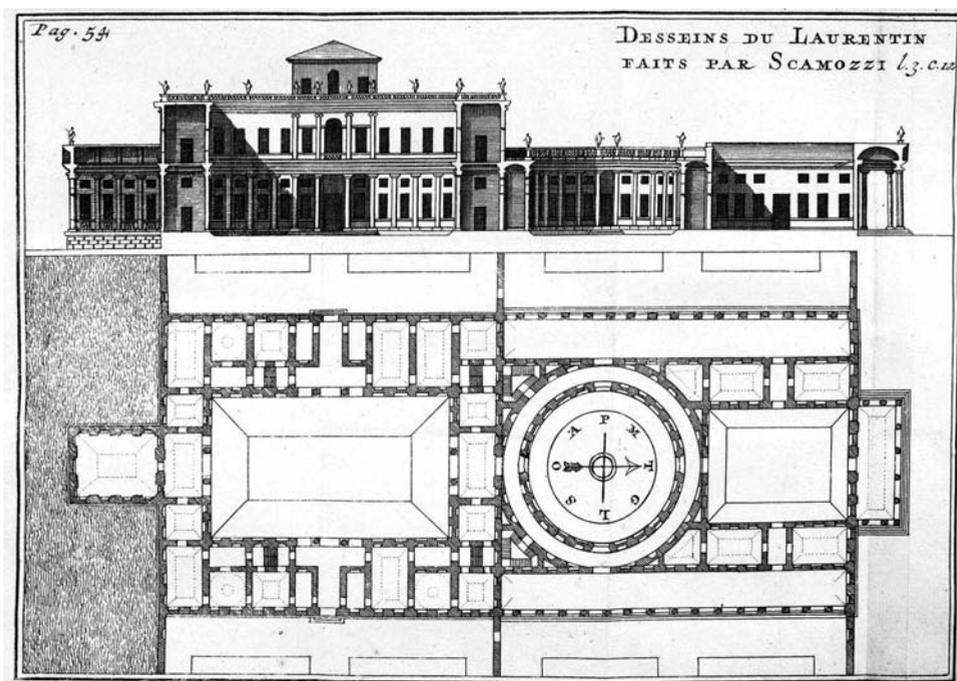


Fig. 3. V. Scamozzi, Reconstructions of the Laurentina, 1615

villa Palombara but also to Scamozzi's (Fig. 3) and Felibien's. Moreover, the entrance and, in particular, the sea façade resemble Renaissance and Neoclassical, Palladian-like structures. On the other hand, both the drawings and the *Notes* leave us in no doubt that he did his best to create an archaeologically correct ancient villa. The first part of the *Notes* presents (like Castell's book, which Potocki does not mention) a kind of commentary of all the key terms to be found in Pliny's letter to Gallus. The second part gives insights concerning architecture and decoration. Potocki writes:

I attempt to base myself on all the most interesting things it [antiquity] offered me. The Pantheon, the Temple of Jupiter Tonans, the Colosseum, the Emperors' Palace, became my architecture books.<sup>19</sup>

Further on, he adds:

That manner of unveiling antiquity, however imperfect it might be, seemed to me the surest and the most simple. For, in fact, I believe it is just as impossible to give an accurate idea of the way the ancients built, at least regarding the interior layout of their houses, as it is to know their households and the details of their private lives, two sorts of knowledge that are so closely linked that one cannot lay claim to the first without having acquired the second.

19] It is unclear whether Potocki had in mind the Domus Aurea or the Palace of Diocletian.



Fig. 4. St. K. Potocki, V. Brenna *Laurentina Villa*, elevation of the sea façade, detail (WAF 67, J. Rys. 5.003)

#### THE DECORATION OF THE VILLA AND ITS SOURCES

Let us begin our investigations on Potocki's reinvention of antiquity with the villa's sea façade. On the top he placed an Emperor (Nerva or Trajan) in a quadriga (Fig. 4), as if the edifice were a public building. The quadriga is placed on a platform in the form of a pyramid in five stages; it would seem that its inspiration derives from Pliny the Elder's description of the Mausoleum at Halicarnassus. The *Natural History* (36, IV, 32) reads:

Above the colonnade of [the Mausoleum] there is a pyramid as high again as the lower structure and tapering in 24 stages to the top of the peak. At the summit there is a four-horse chariot of marble.<sup>20</sup>

20] PLINY THE ELDER 2001, pp. 24-25.

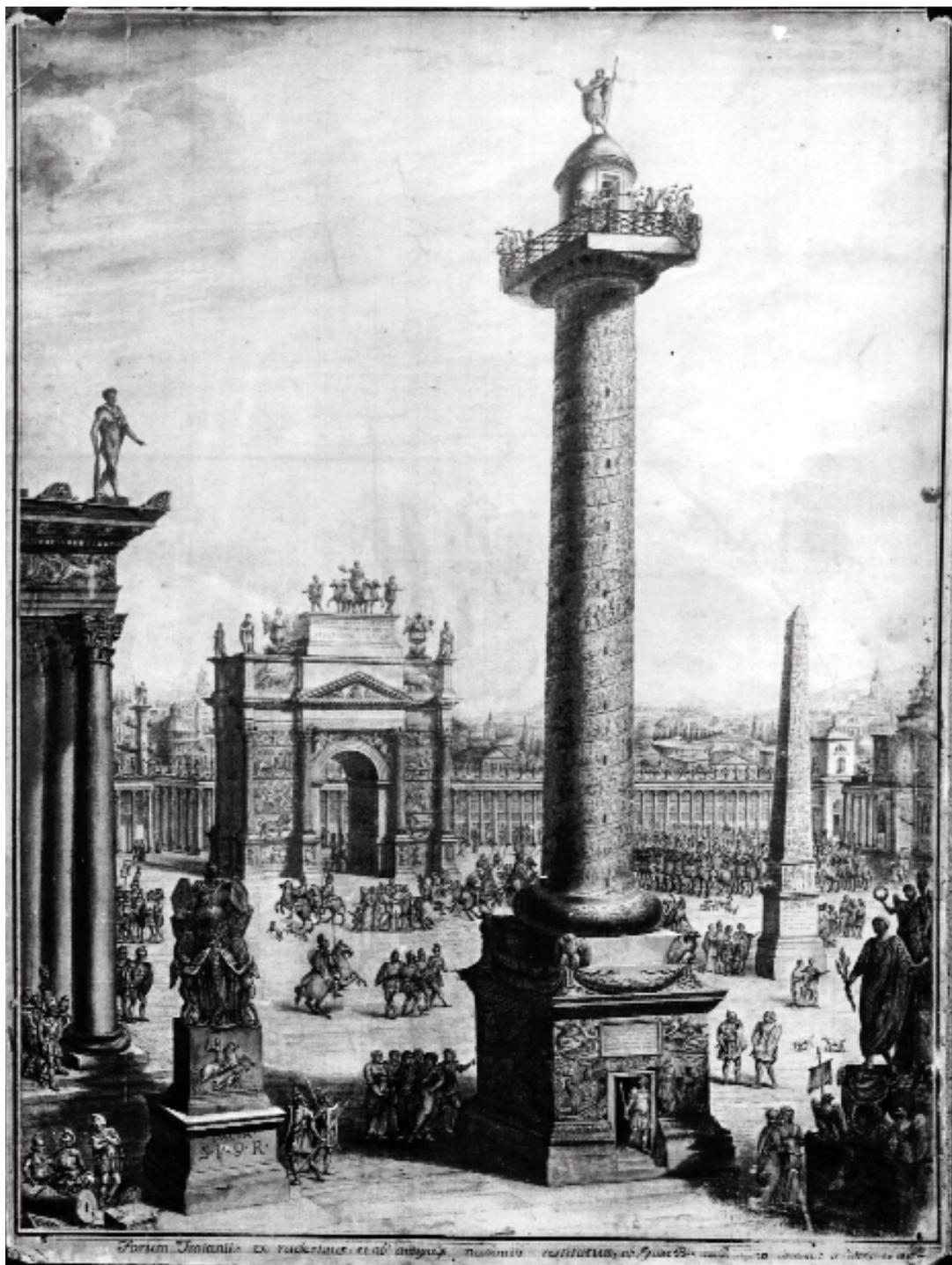


Fig. 5. V. Brenna and F. Smuglewicz, Forum of Trajan, ca. 1775, drawing, private collection

Another source of inspiration may have been Potocki's collaborators themselves, as a similar quadriga is to be seen above the triumphal arch in a drawing depicting the Forum of Trajan by Brenna and Smuglewicz (Fig. 5).<sup>21</sup>

Three of the four façades are adorned with numerous statues of gods, goddesses, philosophers, orators and emperors, and one has the impression that Potocki wanted to embellish the Laurentina with the most famous sculptures of the glorious period of the *Imperium Romanum* which were to be seen in 18th-century Rome. We know from one of Pliny's letters to Trajan that he owned several statues of emperors, including one of Trajan himself (Pliny, *Letters*, X, 8). Thus, it is not surprising that the main façade of the Laurentina is adorned with a Trajan-like imperial portrait which may have been patterned on the Emperor's statue at Ostia.<sup>22</sup>

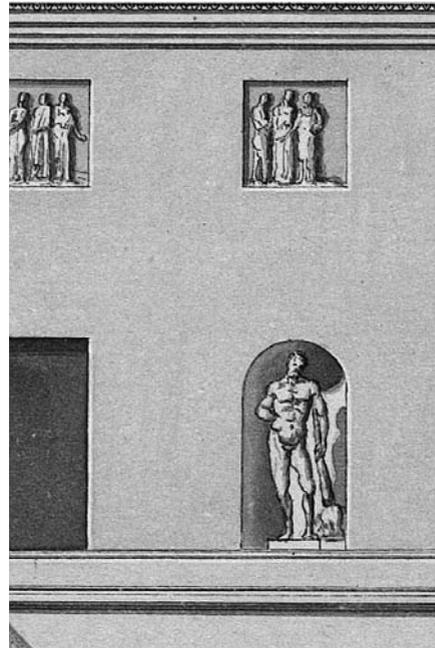


Fig. 6. Potocki, Brenna or Manocchi  
Laurentina Villa, Statue of Hercules on the sea  
façade, detail of WAF 67, J. Rys. 5000

Eight other statues of emperors adorn a building on a drawing in the album entitled *Intérieure de la Villa de Pline le jeune par Brenna*. It does not fit in with any part of the Laurentina scheme, but it was most probably produced in 1777 or in 1786 when Potocki, again in Rome, returned to his Villa project.<sup>23</sup> This drawing is proof that Potocki not only carefully studied Pliny's letters concerning his villas, but also the aforementioned letters sent to the Trajan.

Many of the sculptures on the façades and in the interiors are more or less faithful replicas of statues of gods and heroes: Hercules Farnese and *Hercules Victor*; Apollo of Belvedere, Mercury, Aesculapius, Hygieia and Isis. The Hercules on the sea façade is an interesting combination of two ancient statues: *Hercules Victor* and *Hercules Farnese* (Fig. 6).<sup>24</sup> It is immediately discernible that his long legs and the way in which his head is shown are

21] See Christie's, 6 December, 1988, lot 107. The drawing is attributed to Brenna but the figures in it are clearly by Smuglewicz.

22] See MIZIOLEK, 2006, pp. 27-28 and plate 14.

23] Potocki's letter of 4 March 1786 in which he refers to the Laurentina project is cited in *The Grand Tour* 2006, p. 161.

24] For the *Hercules Victor* and the *Hercules Farnese*, see HASKELL and PENNY 1981, nos. 45-46, pp. 227-232 and figs. 117-118.

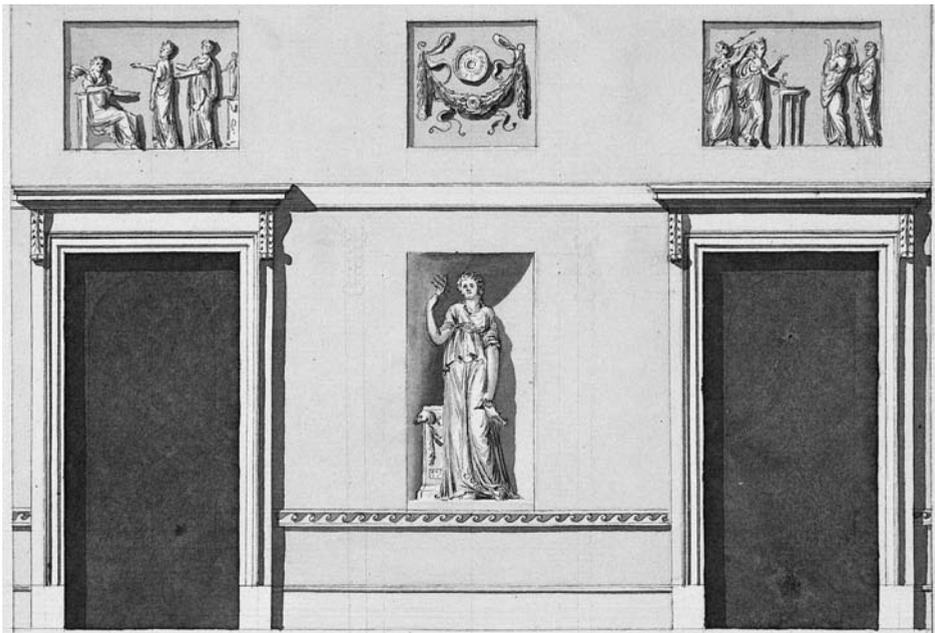


Fig. 7. St. K. Potocki, V. Brenna *Laurentina Villa*, The Room with Three Graces (BNW, WAF 67, J. Rys. 5017)



Fig. 8. Statue of Isis found at Hadrian's Villa at Tivoli, engraving in Bottari G. 1755, Musei Capitolini



Fig. 9. Francesco Bartoli, Hygieia

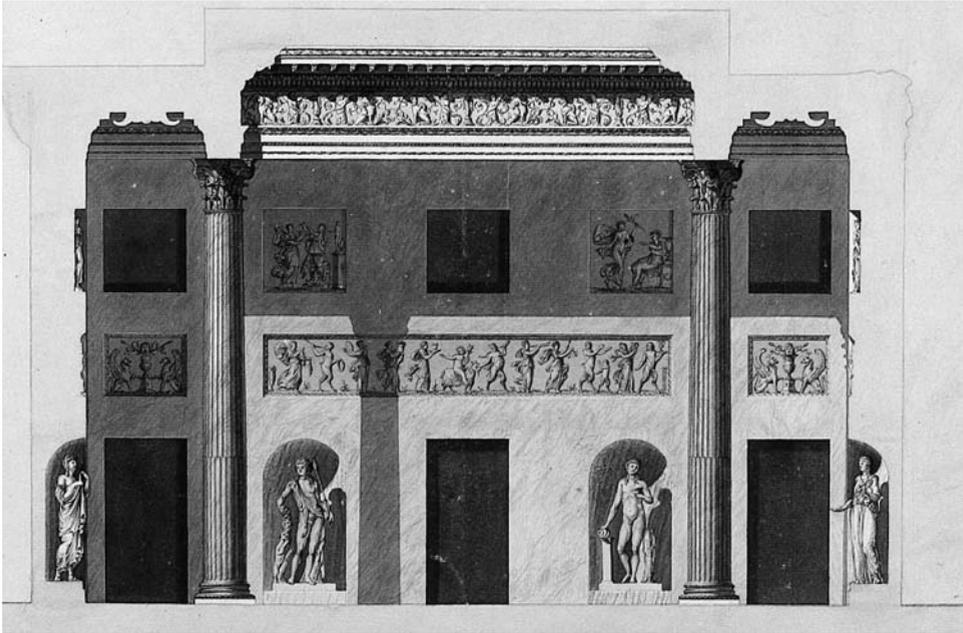


Fig. 10. Potocki, Brenna, Smuglewicz, *Laurentina Villa, Triclinium*, (BNW, WAF 67, J. Rys. 5015)

reminiscent of the former, while the positioning of his arms clearly recalls the latter. Some of the statues executed by less gifted artists than Manocchi are poor replicas of famous originals. A case in point is the statue of Isis in the room adorned with the Three Graces, hence called the Room of the Three Graces. The statue was apparently patterned on the Isis found in Hadrian's Villa at Tivoli, which in the 18th century was, and still is, on display in the Musei Capitolini (Figs 7-8). The author of the drawing, who, unfortunately, did not capture the beauty of the original, may have known it from an engraving in Bottari's book published in 1755.<sup>25</sup> In the main *triclinium* or dining room (in the Laurentina there is one more *triclinium*, although smaller, and a *cenatio*), one of the finest rooms in the villa, there are statues of Dionysus and Hygieia (the Goddess of Health, usually said to be the daughter of Asclepius) among others (Fig. 9-10). There is no doubt that the latter was patterned on a statue of the goddess drawn by Francesco Bartoli.<sup>26</sup>

Also the frescoes on the walls, ceilings and in the niches of several of the Laurentina's rooms are modelled on ancient art. The inspiration for these can be traced not only to the murals in the *Domus Aurea* but also to the ceiling stuccos in Hadrian's villa at Tivoli, and also to the murals that were uncovered at that time in the town of Vesuvius. The Dionysiac procession

25] BOTTARI 1755, plate 73.

26] See BARTOLI 1689, pl. XV. M. Baliszewski indicated to me this drawing.

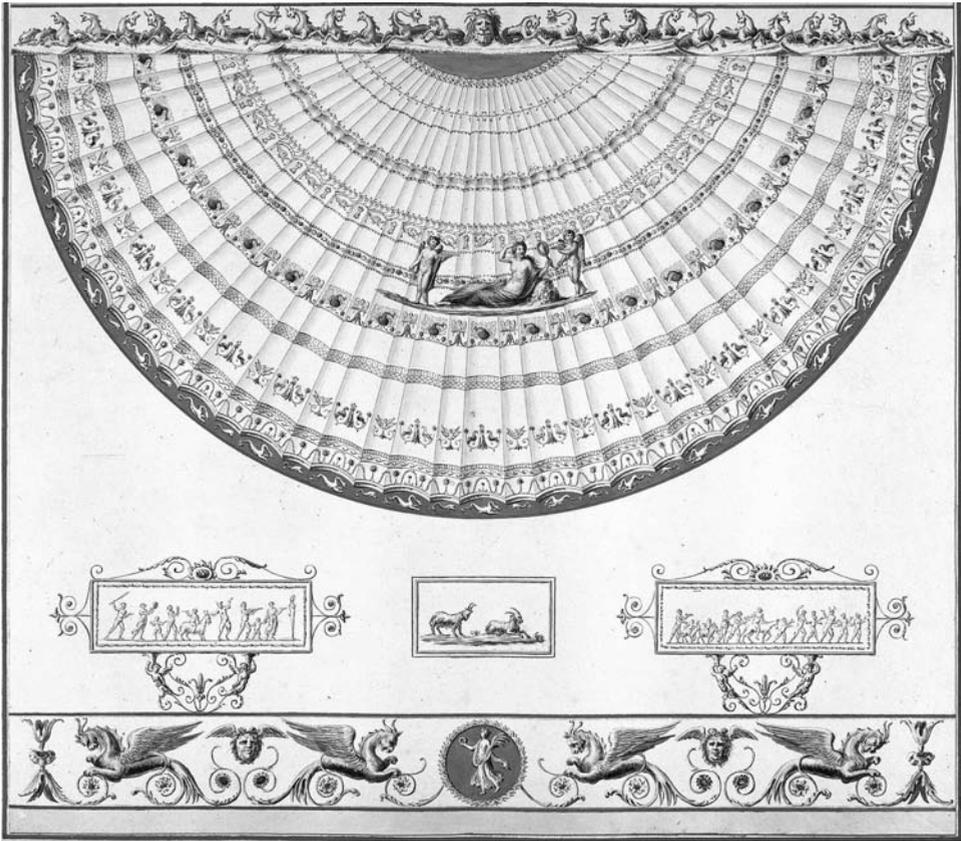


Fig. 11. Carlone, Smuglewicz, Brenna, one of the murals in the Domus Aurea, MNW

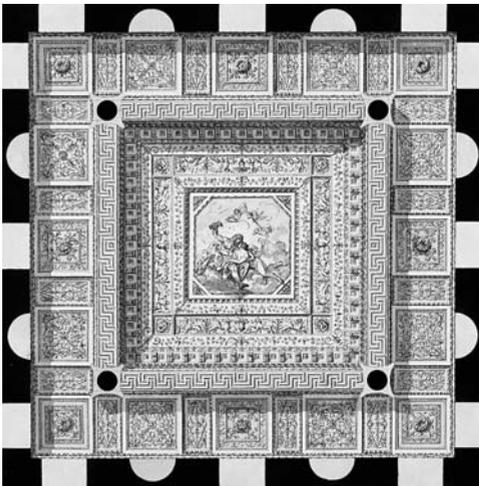


Fig. 12. St. K. Potocki, Manocchi, *Laurentina Villa*, ceiling of *triclinium* (WAF 67, J. Rys. 5.006)

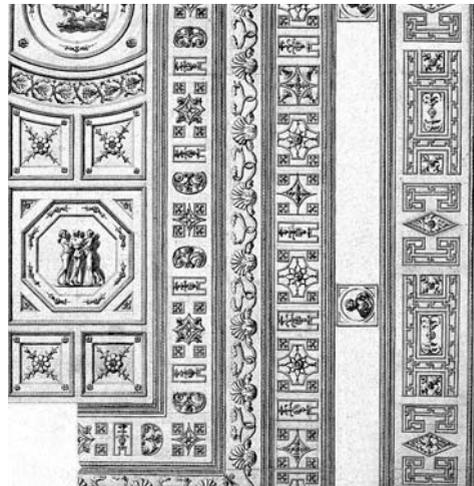


Fig. 13. Manocchi, Project of a ceiling decoration patterned on the decoration of one of the ceilings in Hadrian's Villa, ca 1770, London, John Soane's Museum

shown in the *triclinium* is a more fully developed version of the one found during Mirri's excavations in the mid 1770s in one of the rooms of the *Domus Aurea* and which was reproduced in his album *Vestiglia delle Terme di Tito e loro interne pitture*. This adaptation, which combines two of the processions shown in the same plate (Fig. 11), is quite natural since, as already mentioned, both Brenna and Smuglewicz drew all the murals discovered by Mirri in the *Domus Aurea* and published in the album of 1776.<sup>27</sup> The decorative program in the *triclinium* appears to be devoted to the theme of eating and drinking, culminating on the ceiling. There is a scene showing *Hercules and Hebe* (the heavenly wife of Hercules and the goddess of eternal youth, so popular in Neoclassical art) drinking ambrosia (Fig. 12).<sup>28</sup> This exceptional drawing was certainly executed by Manocchi.<sup>29</sup> It is worth comparing it with a drawing in Sir John Soane's Museum, London, which can also be attributed to the same master (Fig. 13). Both drawings are modelled on the decoration of the ceilings of two interiors in Hadrian's Villa at Tivoli, which Giovanni Battista Piranesi reproduced in his *Vasi, candelabri, cippi, sarcophagi, tripodì, lucerne ed ornamenti antichi* (1778).<sup>30</sup>

One of the most impressive of all of the rooms in Potocki's reconstruction of the Laurentina are the *frigidarium* and *unctorium*, which is

the place designated for rubbing oneself before entering the bath and for applying cologne upon leaving it (Fig. 14).<sup>31</sup>

The *Notes* read:

27] See the colour edition reprinted in 2002, see also PINOT DE VILLECHENON 2002, plate 14.

28] Several other Neoclassical representations of Hebe with Hercules or Hebe alone are listed in REID 1993, pp. 490-492; see also CANOVA 2003, nos. 5.8-5.9, pp. 433-434; KASTNER 2000, p. 117 (a marble tondo by Thorvaldsen at Hearst Castle).

29] In the light of the analysis of the numerous drawings by Mannocchi belonging to the John Soane's Museum in London, there is no doubt that it was this almost forgotten artist who executed the best drawings for Potocki's reconstruction of the Laurentina. In fact, two of his drawings, which have always been attributed to him (one of them is signed), are among the plates with the reconstruction in question. I will analyze Mannocchi's style in a separate paper.

30] Both are reproduced in PIRANESI-FICACCI 2000, p. 596.

31] This drawing was almost certainly executed by Mannocchi; I came to this conclusion having examined many of Mannocchi's drawings housed in the John Soane's Museum. The high artistic quality of the drawing showing the *unctorium*, comparable with the aforementioned depiction of Hebe and Hercules, among others, was also noticed by DE LA RUFFINIÈRE DU PREY 1994, p. 152: "While in Poland, Brenna prepared two alternative competition entries for a Temple of Divine Providence intended for construction at Ujazdów. Brenna's drawings, now in the Print Room of Warsaw University Library (Zb. Król. T. 193 nos. 36-44), in certain respects fall short of the artistic excellence of the Pliny drawings in the Biblioteka Narodowa. This comparison lends credence to Alexander Potocki's statement that his father employed several artists, Italian as well as expatriate Polish. Stanisław Lorentz had suggested in 1946 that one of the other artists could have been the painter Francesco Smuglewicz (1745-1807), an Italophile Pole living in Rome. Such an explanation might account for the exquisite, painterly quality of a gem among the Potocki Pliny drawings depicting a relatively minor round room in the Laurentine Villa. Talent has been lavished on this interior, from the precise underdrawing in pen and ink to the superlative rendering in the French wash technique to convey the proper impression of roundness. Three-legged torchères, watercoloured to resemble bronze, belch smoke realistically. With consummate skill the artist shows an embracing statuary group. This sheet and several others [...] rise above the neoclassical norm by any standard. They surpass in quality most of the other drawings in the portfolio, not to mention those Brenna produced in Warsaw." Smuglewicz's participation in the Potocki reconstruction of the Laurentina still requires clarification.

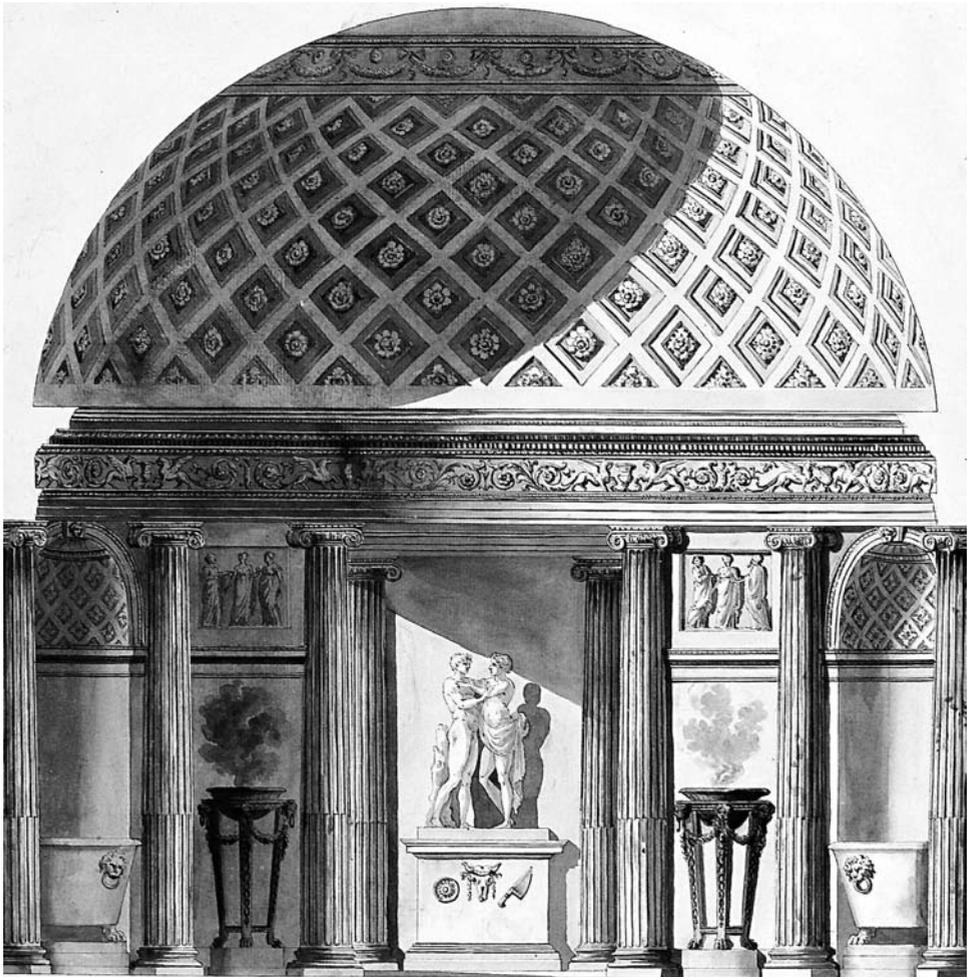


Fig. 14. Potocki, Manocchi, *Laurentina Villa*, unctorium (WAF 67, J. Rys. 5.012)



Fig. 16. Temple of Antoninus and Faustina at Forum Romanum, Motif of Griffins

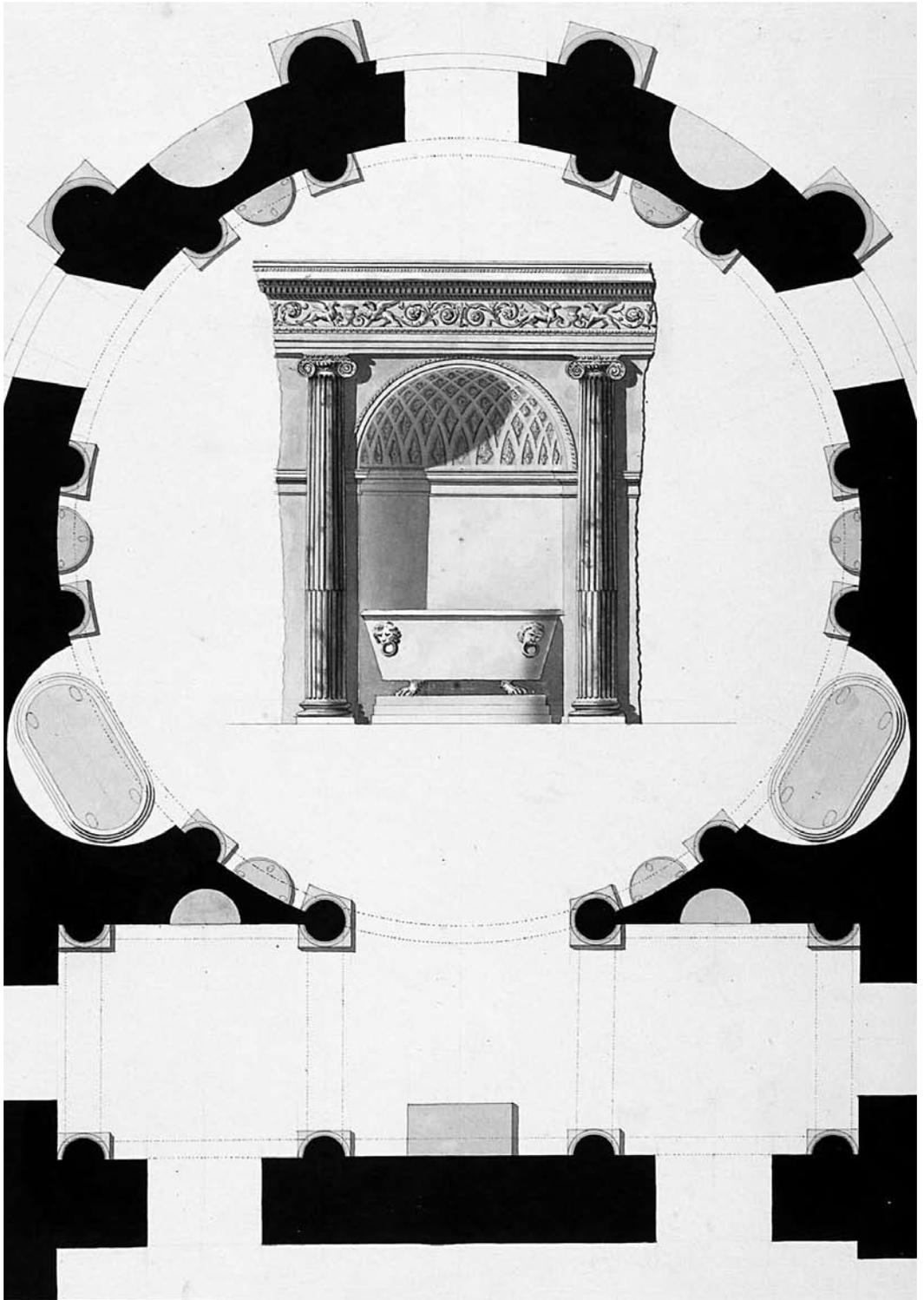


Fig. 15. Ground plan and elevation detail of the unctorium (WAF 67, J. Rys. 5.011)

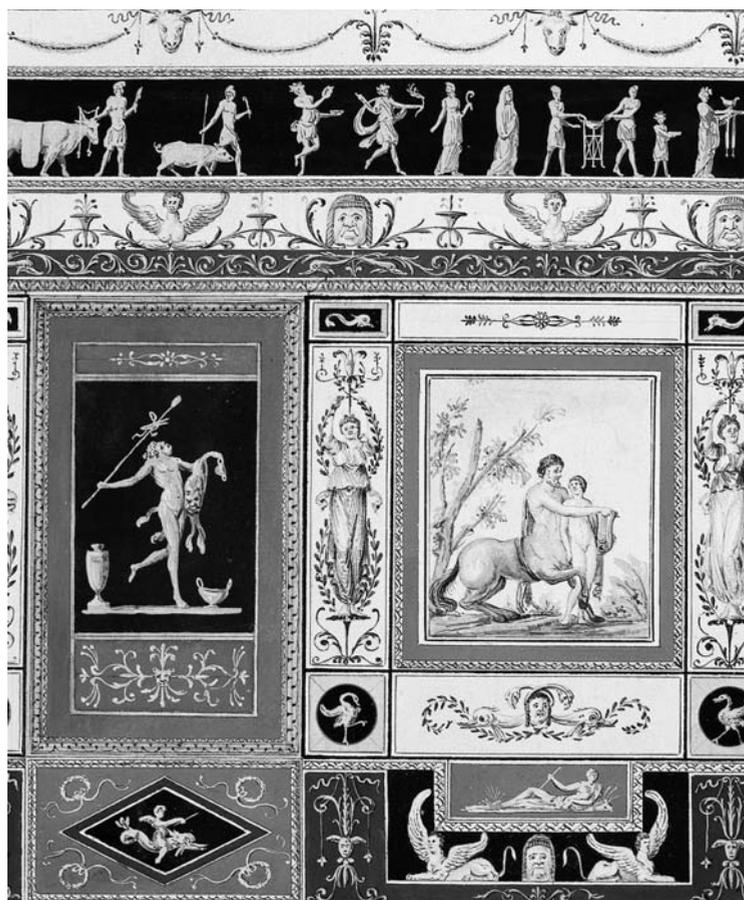


Fig. 17. Potocki, Brenna, Decoration of the *cenatio* with Centaur Chiron and Achilles (WAF 68, J. Rys. 5.028)

[Baths] became the repositories of masterpieces of art, places of amusement, and public buildings, the headquarters for orators and philosophers, the meeting place for the Roman people. [...] Well-off individuals had private baths in their homes, such as those Pliny speaks of, whose luxury and elegance were no less surprising. According to the ancients, the brilliance of gold, paint, sculpture, and the rarest stones vied for attention.<sup>32</sup>

The *unctorium* is a masterpiece. There is a beautiful pantheon-like rotunda, adorned with two tripod perfume burners and two niches on either side, and within this rotunda there is a shrine-like space with statues on a pedestal embodying a couple who are embracing and gazing tenderly at each other. Could they be Cupid and Psyche? The pedestal is adorned with a citation from the very heart of Rome; that is, with the implements of sacrifice and a bull's skull which are borrowed from the famous frieze of the

32] "Notes and Ideas on Pliny's Villa" in MIZIOLEK 2006, p. 10.

Temple of Vespasian at the Forum Romanum.<sup>33</sup> Three adult men in robes and three adult women are depicted on two reliefs located on either side of the statues.

Almost as interesting is a borrowing from one of the archaeological books published in the 1770s, which contains a drawing depicting the ground plan of the *unctorium* (Fig. 15). One of the side niches in it recalls the famous homage to Winkelmann, which Pierre F. H. d'Hancarville published in the third volume of his book about ancient vases, in the collection of William Hamilton.<sup>34</sup> In both cases there are sarcophagi with lions' heads, and despite the differences, it would seem that Potocki's reconstruction also pays tribute to this man. It should be noted that the motif of the Griffins appears in both of the recently discussed drawings; this motif was certainly borrowed from the frieze of the Temple of Antoninus and Faustina at the Forum Romanum (Fig. 16).<sup>35</sup> In turn, the niches shown in Fig. 15 with their lozenge shaped coffers are a version of the apses of the Hadrianic Temple of Venus and Rome. Therefore, as in the other rooms of the Laurentina, there is an eclectic mix of ornamental details which are used to produce new forms acceptable to late 18th-century patrons.

While conducting research on my aforementioned book on the Laurentina, it was found that a set of the three colour drawings from the album entitled *Intérieure de la Villa de Pline le jeune par Brenna* was produced for the so-called *cenatio* of the villa.<sup>36</sup> The scene of the centaur Chiron and Achilles in one of the drawings was borrowed from a painting found in the mid-18th century in the so-called basilica at Herculaneum (Fig. 17). Even if the pose of both the protagonists differs somewhat from the original, there is no doubt that the source of inspiration is to be found in one of the volumes of *Le Antichità di Ercolano*.<sup>37</sup> In turn, the motif of a dancing bacchant with a thyrsus in hand shown on the same drawing was most probably derived from an ancient carved gem, which was also known at that time from etchings,<sup>38</sup> whereas the motif of two boys travelling on a goat, depicted on the second drawing from the set under discussions, derives again from one of the murals found in the *Domus Aurea*.<sup>39</sup> Thus in the *Notes*, Potocki could indeed say:

33] For this famous frieze, see *Roma antiqua* 1985, p. 80.

34] See JENKINS, SLOAN 1996, no. 31, p. 148. See also the new edition of D'Hancarville work: D'HANCARVILLE 2004.

35] This quotation was noticed already by DE LA RUFFINIÈRE DU PREY 1994, p. 161.

36] MIZIOŁEK 2007, pp. 125-136; in fact this proposal is from my collaborators – Maciej Tarkowski and Mikołaj Baliszewski. In my paper (see MIZIOŁEK 2006, p. 31) I expressed the opinion that the drawings under discussion may have been destined for "A pendant to the Laurentina". DE LA RUFFINIÈRE DU PREY 1994, p. 165 so wrote about them: "Ironically, not a single one fits with any part of the Laurentine scheme".

37] *Le Antichità di Ercolano* 1757, vol. 1.

38] This motif, very popular in Neoclassical art, may have been borrowed from an antique marble vase reproduced in Piranesi's *Vasi candelabra, cippi* (1778), see FICACCI 2000, no. 771; or from an antique gem reproduced in MARIETTE 1732, no. 40.

39] See MIZIOŁEK, plate 31.

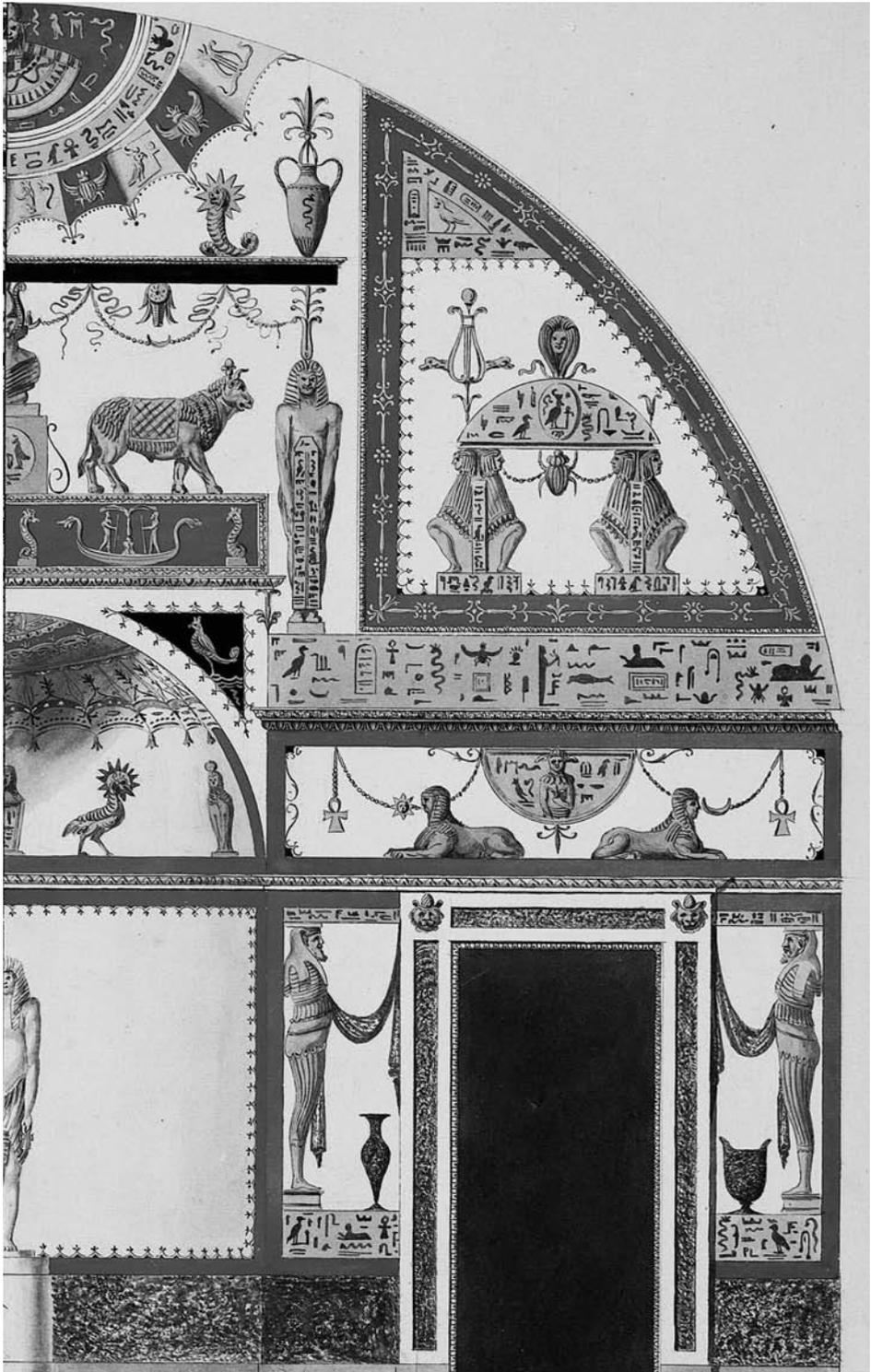


Fig. 18. Potocki, Brenna, Decoration of Laurentina's Library, WAF 68, rys. 5031

Herculaneum, Pompeii, the Bay of Naples, Pozzuoli, the Baths of Titus, and so many other monuments scattered throughout Rome and its environs were of no small aid both in the choice of ancient paintings, ornaments, and mosaics and in the form of the rooms, whose plans I scrupulously followed.

In two of the rooms of Potocki's imaginary Laurentina, in particular the library, one can also detect a source of inspiration in the once famous murals of Gian Battista Piranesi.<sup>40</sup> We see his Egyptian/Etruscan compositions with sphinxes, pyramids, Phoenixes, the bull Apis and painted vases which decorated the Caffè degli Inglesi in the Piazza di Spagna in Rome (Fig. 18). Not surprisingly, perhaps, Potocki repeatedly stayed in a hotel located in that square.

#### THE DECORATION OF THE PAVILIONS IN THE *CRYPTOPORTICUS*

In his letter to Gallus, Pliny writes about the *cryptoporticus* which was, he says, "nearly as large as public buildings", with a terrace in front of it "perfumed with violets" (*Letters*, Book 2, XVII, 16-17). He then goes on to say:

At the far end of the terrace, the arcade and the garden is a suite of rooms which are really and truly my favourites, for I had them built myself. Here there is a sun-parlour [*heliocaminus*] facing the terrace on one side, the sea on the other, and the sun on both (*Letters*, Book 2, XVII, 19-20).

Potocki imagined the *cryptoportico* to be adorned with beautiful fresco decorations of the grotesque type, covering both the walls and the ceiling. In the upper part of the image, we can see a beautiful semicircular construction with a coffered apse which was to face the sea (Fig. 19). Above the apse there are two Victories paying 'homage' to a seven-piped *syrinx*, or panpipes in a wreath, while below there is an *all'antica* bench with a relief above it, depicting four eagles supporting garlands. The latter motif is to be found in the temple of Diana at Nîmes and in one of Piranesi's etchings.<sup>41</sup>

De la Ruffinière du Prey has identified the beautiful semicircular construction as *heliocaminus*. The *Notes* contains the following commentary:

After a great deal of research and misunderstandings about the way the *heliocaminus* might have been constructed – a few scholars wrongly made it a sitting room, others an entirely open and raised place – M. Orlandi, a learned antiquarian, pointed out to me, among the scattered ruins found between Tivoli and Rome, a sort of semi-circular vaulted niche designed to prevent the heat of the sun and protect against cold winds.

40] For Piranesi's decoration in the Caffè, see Grand Tour 1996, nos. 73-74; SCOTT 1975, pp. 224-225, figs. 258-259. The Caffè was placed next to the Spanish Steps in the Piazza di Spagna. The designs were published together with a description in Piranesi's *Diverse maniere*.

41] See CLERISSEAU 1995, fig. 40 and in one of the etchings of Piranesi, see SCOTT 1975, p. 224, fig. 270; this a fireplace design executed for the Dutch banker, John Hope.

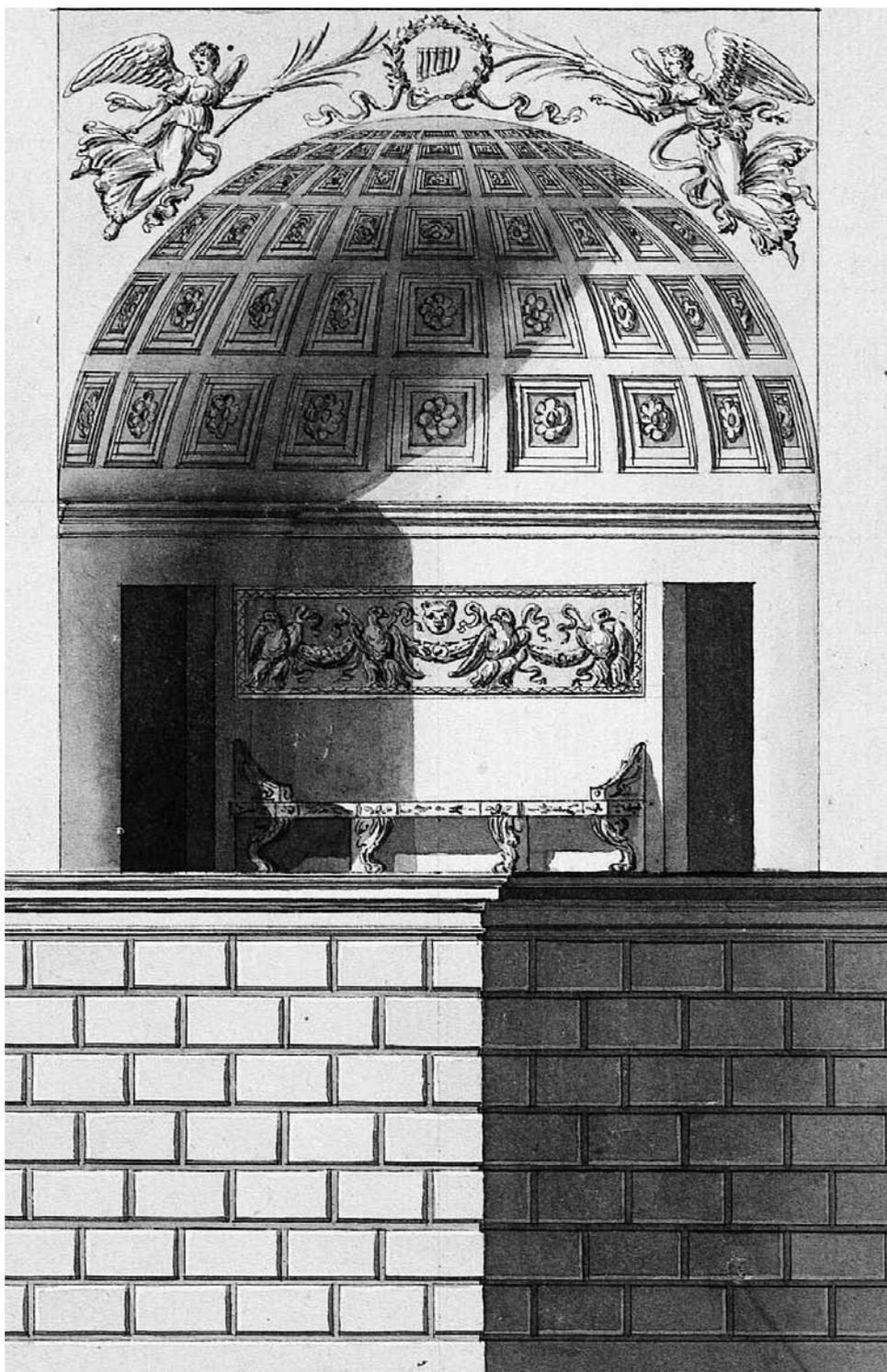


Fig. 19. Potocki, Brenna, Heliocaminus, detail of WAF 67, rys. 5024

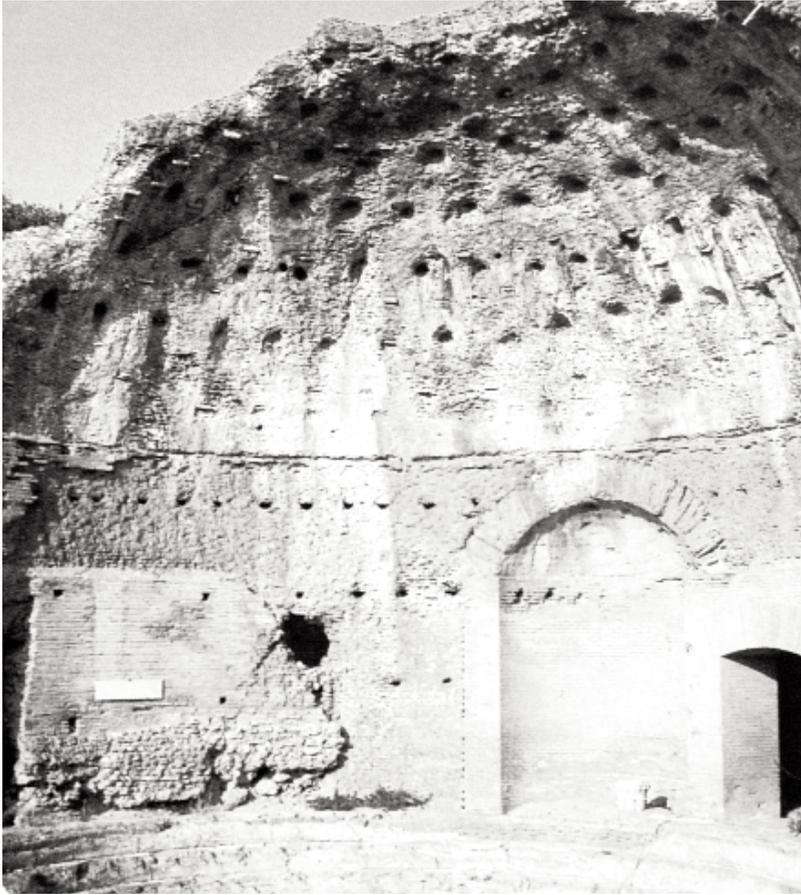


Fig. 20. The so-called *heliocaminus* in Hadrian's Villa at Tivoli

He assured me that, after intensive research, he had become convinced that this was the true *heliocaminus* of the ancients. His idea agreed so well with what Pliny says that I did not hesitate to adopt it.<sup>42</sup>

It has recently been possible to identify the “learned antiquarian” whom Potocki consulted. Orazio Orlandi was the author of several books on Antiquity published in the latter half of the 18th century; some of them were illustrated after Smuglewicz’s drawings.<sup>43</sup> Although, as yet, little is known about his knowledge of archaeology, Potocki may have seen with him the so-called *heliocaminus* in Hadrian’s Villa at Tivoli (Fig. 20).<sup>44</sup> In fact the

42] “Notes and Ideas on Pliny’s Villa” in MIZIOLEK 2006, p. 35.

43] Orlandi published, among other things, *Osservazioni di varia erudizione sopra un sacro cameo rappresentante il serpente di bronzo* (Rome 1773), and *Ragionamento di Orazio Orlandi romano sopra una ara antica posseduta da Monsignore Antonio Casali governatore di Roma* (Rome 1772). In the former work are to be found the etchings produced after Franciszek Smuglewicz’s drawings.

44] For Tivoli’s *heliocaminus*, see PARIBENI 1926, VERDUCHI 1975; CICERCHIA 1985.

shape of the semicircular structure facing the sea at the end of *cryptoporticus* under discussion appears to be very similar to it.

The question is why is there a *syrix* and not a solar motif in the decoration of the *heliocaminus* or, given the fact that it faced the sea, an aquatic subject? Perhaps we are witnessing the impact of the growing popularity of bucolic subjects and also of Pan; the syringa, or panpipes, was the beloved instrument of this Arcadian deity.<sup>45</sup> More important is the fact that at the time when Potocki was producing his reconstruction of the Laurentina he had been, since 1775, a member of the Society of Arcadians, the famous Roman association of men of letters.<sup>46</sup> In addition to this, the *cryptoporticus* was in the garden and there was also a view on “to the woods and mountains in the distance”, as Pliny puts it (*Letters*, Book 2, XVII, 5).<sup>47</sup>

In Pliny’s letter there is a passage in which he expresses his true happiness with one or perhaps two pavilions attached to the *cryptoporticus*. He writes:

There is also a bedroom which has folding doors opening on to the arcade and a window looking out on the sea. [...] Here there is a second storey, with two living-rooms below and two above, as well as a dining-room which commands the whole expanse of sea and stretch of shore with all its lovely houses. [...] When I retire to this suite I feel as if I have left my house [...] especially during the Saturnalia when the rest of the roof resounds with festive cries in the holiday freedom, for I am not disturbing my household’s merrymaking, nor they my work. (*Letters*, Book 2, XVII, 20-24).

Thus this suite of rooms was indeed a true place of seclusion.

Potocki, like Castell,<sup>48</sup> was convinced that Pliny had in mind not one, but two edifices/pavilions at the ends of the *cryptoportico*; we can see them both on the plan of the whole estate and on three other plates. Two of them show the façades and the ground plan of both pavilions, while the third depicts the inner decoration. It is possible to find the models for most of the motifs; some of them derive either from the towns of Vesuvius or from the *Domus Aurea*.<sup>49</sup> There is no doubt that if Potocki had published his reconstruction of the Laurentina together with his *Notes* before the end of the 18th

45] For the god Pan and his panpipes, see MIZIOLEK 1999, with further bibliography.

46] For Potocki as a member of the Society of Arcadians, see GROCHULSKA 1984, p. 159. For interesting observations on this Society, see GOETHE 1970, pp. 442-446. Goethe concludes his memoirs concerning his admission to the Society with the following sentence: “The seal [on the diploma] shows a wreath, half laurel, half pines, in the centre of which is a syrix. Underneath, the words: *Gli Arcadi*.”

47] PLINY THE YOUNGER, 2000, pp. 134-135.

48] See CASTELL 1728, pp. 44ff.

49] See MIZIOLEK 2007, p. 138, figs. 128-129.

century, its impact on Neoclassical art might have been greater than Mirri's and Ponce's publications.<sup>50</sup>

#### POTOCKI AND 18TH CENTURY ARCHAEOLOGY

Both in the *Notes* and in the paper reconstruction of the Laurentina, Potocki appears not only to be stimulated by Winckelmann, but also to some degree to be a pupil or follower of Francesco Scipione Marchese Maffei, who died in 1755, the year in which Potocki was born.<sup>51</sup> In his *Verona illustrata* and the description of the *Tazza Farnese*, published in *Osservazioni letterarie* of 1736, Marchese based his assertions not only on an analysis of written sources, but also on the direct examination of monuments. This was also how Potocki unveiled and reconstructed antiquity. In the final part of his *Commentary* he says:

The passages from the authors on whom we rely are no longer clear and reliable. Even Vitruvius, the father of architecture, would be an unreliable guide if some of the monuments destined for immortality by the masters of the world did not explain to us what he was saying about them. In fact, I boldly venture to say that the above-mentioned description would still be an enigma for us if that of Rome, of Verona, of Nîmes, and of Pula were not part of it, so to speak.

Potocki then writes about “the creative genius of Greece” and “the grandeur and boldness of the Romans”. Such phrases as “grandeur and boldness”, “beauty and perfection”, “the sublime in architecture”, and “sublime simplicity of the ancient” bring to mind Winckelmann's *History of the Art in Antiquity* and *Reflections on the Imitation of Greek Works in Painting and Sculpture*<sup>52</sup> and, to a certain extent, Longinus' *On the Sublime*.<sup>53</sup> In fact, Potocki begins his *Notes* with a brief reference to Winckelmann who, in his *History of the Art in Antiquity*, described “precious marble, beautiful mosaics, and a few busts of the greatest beauty”, which were to be found among the ruins of what was presumed to be Pliny's villa.<sup>54</sup> Thus, the ‘real’ remnants of the *villa marittima* and the idealised vision of ancient art, as well as thoughts about the beautiful and the sublime, brought about a dream-like paper reconstruction of the Laurentina in order “to do justice to the pure taste of the century of Trajan”.

50] For Ponce's publication of the murals in the Domus aurea in 1786 (2nd edn. 1805), see PERRIN 1982, 2, pp. 883-891.

51] For Maffei and the importance of his publications, see POMIAN 1990, pp. 169-184.

52] WINCKELMANN 1987. See also POTTS 1994, pp. 113ff.

53] LONGINUS 1946.

54] WINCKELMANN 2006, p. 343; see also p. 74.

## APPENDIX

FRAGMENTS OF THE NOTES AND IDEAS ON PLINY'S VILLA<sup>55</sup>

BY COUNT STANISŁAW KOSTKA POTOCKI

*From an unpublished manuscript  
in French, translated by Jane Marie Todd;  
preliminary notes by Jerzy Miziołek*

## IDEAS GUIDING THE PLAN FOR PLINY'S HOUSE

Several architects have undertaken to provide a plan of the villa of Laurentina described by Pliny the Younger in Letter 17 of his Book 2. Félibien made it a French chateau, Scamozzi a palace like those that adorn the banks of the Brenta, Father Marquez one of those buildings born of the corrupt taste of the last century.<sup>56</sup> The research I did on this subject made them familiar to me. My plan was drafted; I sensed what was lacking in theirs without being blinded to my own. In fact, I would have suppressed it entirely after learning about the others had I not found it had the character of antiquity, less ingenious perhaps in terms of invention, but truer and more in conformity with all that antiquity has set before my eyes. I attempt to base myself on all the most interesting things it offered me. The Pantheon, the Temple of Jupiter Tonans, the Colosseum, the Emperors' Palace, became my architecture books, from which I drew the most beautiful proportions from the orders known to us. Herculaneum, Pompeii, the Bay of Naples, Pozzuoli, the Baths of Titus, and so many other monuments scattered throughout Rome and its environs were of no small aid both in the choice of ancient paintings, ornaments, and mosaics and in the form of the rooms, whose plans I scrupulously followed. So it is that in gathering together the most beautiful remains of Roman architecture and embellishing Pliny's villa with them, I thought I could do justice to the pure taste of the century of Trajan, and to that of one of the greatest men who distinguished it. I have thereby given to this little work a kind of interest that it otherwise does not deserve. That manner of unveiling antiquity, however imper-

55] I am grateful to Krzysztof Ligota and Jean-Michel Massing, who deciphered some French terms in the manuscript, and to Chiara Sulprizio, my research assistant at the Getty Research Institute (GRI), who made corrections to the Latin and identified some of the quotations. The present translation was made thanks to the generosity of GRI.

56] MARQUEZ 1796. THUS, 1796 is the *terminus post quem* for Potocki's text. RUFFINIERE DU PREY 1994: note 49 on p. 349 is of the opinion that: "The post-1800 dating is clear from [Notes...] p. 217, with its reference to Marquez [...]".

fect it might be, seemed to me the surest and the most simple. For, in fact, I believe it is just as impossible to give an accurate idea of the way the ancients built, at least regarding the interior layout of their houses, as it is to know their households and the details of their private lives, two sorts of knowledge that are so closely linked that one cannot lay claim to the first without having acquired the second. In the absence of reliable means to achieve it, a passionate belief in systems has futilely aspired to subject the creative genius of Greece to fixed rules, along with the grandeur and boldness of the Romans, to whom nothing seems impossible, and which is still alive in the astonishing debris of the ancient capital of the world, incomparable models of taste and perfection, in whose footsteps we have followed but poorly. In that way, in subjecting our masters to the laws that we received from them, we often attribute to them our own smallness, and almost always our own ideas. The difference in our mores, our laws, our practices, our religion, and above all our methods is an obstacle between us and antiquity no less insurmountable than many centuries spent in the most profound barbarism and ignorance. These causes also converge, often preventing us from grasping its spirit and from implementing it. Hence all the research of the most learned antiquarians in this respect have seemed to me only vain efforts of people groping in the dense shadows that veil antiquity. A ray of light shines in their eyes for an instant and suddenly plunges them back into even denser shadows. Such are the debris of ancient magnificence, made more to astonish and confound us than to enlighten and instruct us thoroughly, an inevitable source of difficulties and errors. The passages from the authors on whom we rely are no more clear and reliable. Even Vitruvius, the father of architecture, would be an unreliable guide if some of the monuments destined for immortality by the masters of the world did not explain to us what he was saying about them. In fact, I boldly venture to say that the above-mentioned description would still be an enigma for us if that of Rome, of Verona, of Nîmes, and of Pula were not part of it, so to speak. Nevertheless, some have claimed to give us models of ancient buildings of every kind. Everything is fixed, everything is established. But what fixes and establishes everything is the location of the site and the needs and taste of those who built. Are we to believe that they built on the vast plains of Rome in the same way as on those rocks [*illegible*] by the sea, as Horace depicts them in Pozzuoli and Baiae?

*Tu secunda marmora*

*Locas sub ipsum funus, et sepulcri*

*Immemor struis domos:*

*Marisque Bais obstrepentis urges,*

*Summovere litora*

*Parum locuples continente ripa.*

[But you, though in the very shadow of death, place contracts for cutting marble slabs, and build houses without giving a thought to your tomb. You press on to move back the coastline where the sea roars in protest at Baiae, for you have insufficient property as long as the shore hems you in].<sup>57</sup>

Anyone who has seen these sites, anyone who has examined them with the attention of an amateur and the insight of a connoisseur, will easily agree that it is just as unreasonable to claim to fix the form of ancient houses as that of our own, simply because they have towers, staircases, rooms, and bedchambers. In describing Versailles, I would give no more idea of Caserta than that to which the conventions of royal homes may lend themselves. What would I have done other than confuse one of the most beautiful monuments of modern architecture with the bizarre caprices of Mansard supported by the magnificence of the most ostentatious of kings? Although we are therefore forbidden as it were from penetrating into the interior of ancient homes and combing every corner of antiquity, satisfying our curiosity more than our learning, how many striking models of the sublime in architecture it offers us. How could it not be easy for us to extract its character, of which simplicity formed the foundation, and elegance and proportion among the parts the principal ornament, while beauty and perfection in execution happily converged to make the whole perfect? Three orders formed their true architecture: they used them with more elegance than perfection, and with more harmony and proportion than luxury in the ornaments, whose noble and male beauty had something infinitely greater and more piquant than the love of ornaments of every kind by which some claim to supplement the sublime simplicity of the ancients.

I will stop here in spite of myself, amid detail too well suited to lead me beyond my subject. What I have said is enough to give an idea of the character of architecture I have sought to give to Pliny's villa. If my efforts have been in vain, it will be easy for those more skillful to profit from my mistakes and from an idea that, properly developed, could only be interesting.

57] HORACE, *Carmina* 2.17-22 (*The Vanity of Riches*), in HORACE 2004, p. 133.

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