



**The Early Modern Villa:
Senses and Perceptions versus Materiality**
International Symposium

Convenors:

Barbara Arciszewska, Warsaw University
Paweł Jaskanis, Wilanów Palace Museum

Wilanów Palace
October 15-17, 2014

Enhanced interest in sensual perception was one of the mainstays of early modern culture. The development of new visual conventions (most notably the linear perspective) and “ocularcentric” character of early modern science has long focused scholarly attention on the contemporary obsession with sight and with optical illusion. Yet sight, although privileged as a nucleus of artistic theory and analytical instrument in natural philosophy, was but one of the senses which were to be attracted, and then gratified by the display of early modern art and architecture. The complex discourse of sensual perception and gratification embraced all senses, although their role depended on the comparative value assigned to the senses themselves, on their abilities to provoke desire, provide delight, and grant access to knowledge. The diversity of sensual stimuli was perhaps most evident in the villa estate – its architecture and landscape design. **The role of the senses and sensual perception in the planning, design, as well as functioning and reception of the villa (c. 1450-1800), will be the focus of this conference, set against the essential materiality of architecture and nature**, understood as the framework of reference for the sensual experience rooted in pre-modern concepts of the corporeal sensorium.

The conventional, Aristotelian five senses (sight, hearing, touch, smell, taste) often appeared in the allegorical disguise in decorations of early modern villas, indicating particular significance of these themes for suburban or country residences. Indeed, the contemporary villa and surrounding estate, combining nature and artifice, offered a perfect site for deploying diverse strategies of sensuality. The symposium aims to explore this sense-oriented villa culture from the point of view of the patron, artist/artisan as well as the audience, in their class and gender polarization. The submissions examining how theory and practice of contemporary architectural and landscape design, as well as interior decoration and furnishings, offered ways of engaging sight, touch, or any other sense, by a myriad of means:

colour, shape, texture etc. are particularly welcome. Case studies reporting new findings in the area of colour use in the early modern interiors, as well as papers discussing various attempts to bridge the gap between senses in the context of villa architecture and its fittings, facilities, machinery, accessories and garden structures, such as musical fountains, edible sculpture etc. are equally encouraged. The organizers also seek papers demonstrating how the social ritual of the contemporary *villeggiatura* served as a means of sensual display. Because indulging the senses was a pleasure, as well as a potential threat to virtue – papers exploring the intertwined discourses of sensuality and anti-sensuality in the early modern period will be of significant interest too, together with those setting such debates within broad social, political and economic contexts.

PROPOSAL GUIDELINES

Proposals for 30-minute papers (including a 250-word abstract and brief *curriculum vitae*, along with a mailing address, telephone number, fax, and e-mail address) should be submitted **by October 30, 2013** to Mr. Marek Wasilewicz (Wilanów Palace Museum):

villaconference2014@muzeum-wilanow.pl

By post:

Marek Wasilewicz,
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Proposals may be mailed, faxed, or e-mailed (e-mail submission is preferred).

Papers will be selected competitively on the basis of the abstracts. Authors of the successful submissions will be notified during the week of **January 13, 2014**. Full version of the paper will be due on **August 31, 2014**.