

## BOOK REVIEW

Flaminia Bardati

**'Il bel palatio in forma di castello': Gaillon tra 'Flamboyant' e Rinascimento**

Rome: Campisano Editore, 2009, 272 pp., ill., € 40

ISBN 978-88-88168-50-0

Between Paris and Rouen, along the course of the river Seine in Normandy, only a few architectural remnants survive to attest to a glorious past. Among these is the subject of Flaminia Bardati's study: the *château* of Gaillon. In scarcely a dozen years, between 1498 and 1510, the influential Georges I d'Amboise (1460–1510) had the city-castle rebuilt. This man was one of the leading personalities of his time: archbishop of Rouen, Amboise was also a cardinal, a papal legate *a latere*, the principal adviser to King Louis XII, and one of the moving forces behind the French conquest of Italy. The castle he rebuilt in Gaillon was a memorable structure. Until the French Revolution, when interventions to convert it into a prison virtually destroyed the layout, the edifice was an architectural achievement that is considered representative of the first phase of the French Renaissance. The building has not been the subject of a monographic study since the 1950s, and Bardati's new study was long overdue. This reader's expectations of the book have been amply satisfied.

Bardati has done far more than simply retrace the history of the castle from its origins as a twelfth-century fortress up to the interventions of Charles de Bourbon (1523–90). Instead, she begins by examining the rich and diverse life story of Cardinal d'Amboise, of whom a modern biography has yet to be written. This account lays particular emphasis on the many journeys Amboise made to Italy, a wise decision in the context of this study, as these trips have frequently been cited to help explain the Italianate character of Gaillon, a view Bardati also subscribes to.

The book then offers a minutely detailed chronology of the castle's construction (chapter 2). It shows to what marked extent this was an international building campaign, as the assembled evidence reveals how intensely French, Italian, and Flemish artisans collaborated at Gaillon. The journey Cardinal d'Amboise made to Rome in 1503, on the occasion of the conclave that led to the election of Pope Julius



Photograph: EAHN



II della Rovere, gains special significance. His trip marked a change in direction for the design and construction of the castle (chapter 3). D'Amboise had been deeply affected by seeing the new architecture of Rome erected in the latter part of the fifteenth century, in particular the many new cardinals' palaces; partly in attempt to rival the new pope, no doubt, he decided to construct several buildings at Gaillon that would recall those of Rome (chapters 4 and 5). Thus the space formed by the great court was straightened, paved, and adorned with porticoes, among which we find the Galerie de Gênes and its magnificent Porte. All of these were decorated in an antique manner, which allowed the installation of a ceremonial walkway worthy of imperial triumphs.

Bardati is equally convincing in arguing for a Neapolitan influence on Gaillon, a case that is especially compelling for the Porte de Gênes. The model for this gate, which was sculpted from wood, was the Castelnuovo arch in Naples, built for Alfonso the Magnanimous between 1453 and 1457. It was replaced in 1508 by the stone gate—still visible today—that was installed on the occasion of the visit of King Louis XII and Anne of Brittany. The author suggests that the design reached Normandy through Jérôme Pacherot, an Italian artist who came to France following the expedition of Charles VIII in 1495.

In a later chapter (chapter 6), Bardati examines the operation of the workshop at Gaillon, bringing it back to life through an attentive reading of the project's accounts. She also discusses the arrangement and maintenance of the gardens around the castle, and the parkland beyond it, which was used for hunting (chapter 7). In view of this wealth of detailed information it is a pity that the author hasn't paid more attention to the art works that decorate the interior of the castle, in particular the library, the gilded cabinet, and the chapel.

The book includes a valuable bibliographic appendix of texts related to Gaillon castle from 1507 to 1777. These ancient descriptions attest to the success of the project; they also allow us to overcome the ravages of time in some measure and help to bring to life this 'bel palatio in forma di castello.'

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## BOOK REVIEW

Katherine Wentworth Rinne

**The Waters of Rome: Aqueducts, Fountains, and the Birth of the Baroque City**  
New Haven – London: Yale University Press, 2011, 262 pp., 135 b/w and 32 colour ill., £ 35  
ISBN 978-0-300-15530-3

As the future availability, use, and control of water for farming and human consumption becomes an increasingly urgent global topic under the spectre of climate change, studies are pouring off the presses about water management and ownership in the ancient, medieval, early modern, and modern worlds. Katherine Rinne, an urban designer who has in recent years held distinguished fellowships in Rome and in the USA, and who is director of the website *Aquae Urbis Romae: The Waters of the City of Rome*, has now written a book of singular importance in this field. Some architectural historians and historians of fountain sculpture will doubtless find *The Waters of Rome: Aqueducts, Fountains, and the Birth of the Baroque City* strange and even disappointing in that its focus is not exclusively on the works of art and their iconography, as is usually the case. Indeed, Rinne's text bristles with hostility towards the art historical interpretations of fountains that assume the sculptural decoration to be the chief scholarly interest. She is likely to say that certain fountains are 'larded' (p. 89) or 'filled' (p. 96) with sculpture if those sculptures are not demonstrably functional elements of the water display. This is a contentious issue that merits further debate, given that art historians are likely to regard any sculpture on a fountain that is even marginally touched by running or splashing water as being essentially related to the design concept of the fountain. Rinne's rather extreme view is that 'fountains are meant to contain water, not sculpture.' (p. 89)

Rinne draws her voluminous information about the planning, design, and delivery of water to fountains and other water distribution sources in Rome from the mid-Cinquecento onwards, mainly from fresh archival sources in Rome's Archivio di Stato and the Vatican. Her approach is to raise all the difficult, basic questions about Rome's water supply and distribution: where the water came from; how it was moved from distant springs along newly created aqueducts;