

Laudation Porcinai Association & Archives

Mariachiara Pozzana, Florence

'Learning from Pietro Porcinai'

Pietro Porcinai was born in Florence in villa Gamberaia in 1910 and died in Florence in 1986. He has been the most important Italian landscape architect last century.

His work started in the thirties, developing in Tuscany, Italy and all over the world.

After a first education in Tuscany as a gardener, he moved to study in Germany, and the influence of both Italian style and German methodology is a permanent sign in his work. In fact in Germany he discovered the existence of the profession of landscape architect, as a new contemporary work and in Villa Gamberaia he understood the classic Italian garden, conceived as a sculpture at landscape scale. These two sources were important and constant references in his project.

One example amongst his more than 1400 gardens, can express at the best the relationship with the past, and the modern interpretation he was able to give: if we compare Villa Gamberaia and villa il Roseto two masterpieces in the history of Italian garden design, we can understand the continuity of the tradition and the essential concept of his design. No more ornament but the same space organisation, the same proportion and the same perspective rule, based on the use of geometry. Of course also vegetation is a modern interpretation of the traditional topiary art of the Italian garden. For that reason he was able to translate the tradition of the historic garden into a modern garden, created for the modern life, but conserving the harmony and the proportion of the Italian classic garden.

In 1931 he was already working for a nursery in Pistoia, and designed his first gardens in Tuscany and in the south of Italy. He was used to say: 'I am a landscape architect' and most people didn't understand even the meaning of the expression. He was a real pioneer in landscape architecture in Italy. Many of his projects are now considered as first examples of a modern way of interpreting the garden. The swimming pool in villa I Collazzi, for example, which is one of the first swimming pool in Tuscany connected to an historical villa, or the first 'infinity pool' in Portofino, which has been published by John Pawson in his book 'Minimum' as an example of 'ante litteram' minimalismus.

His masterpieces as villa il Roseto, villa Catastini, villa Ottolenghi in Acqui Terme, the Mattei's Monument, villa Leonetti in Napoli, and many others, are of great importance in the history of landscape architecture in Italy and at the same time they represent the connection between the history and the future of garden design in Italy. Learning from Pietro Porcinai is for Italian students the best opportunity to discover the Italian art of creating beauty with nature.

Porcinai left a very rich archive with documents, drawings, photos of his more than 1400 works all over the world, and also a specialized library. Everything is now conserved in the

Porcinai's Archive in the green house in villa Rondinelli in Fiesole, where Anna Porcinai is working organising all the documents, to let students of all the world approach the knowledge of Porcinai' work. At the same time in 2009 was created the Porcinai's Association before the centenary of his birth, with the principal aim to promote the knowledge and the protection of Porcinai's work. Paola Porcinai is working with a group of experts, to develop the study in many Italian regions of the Porcinai's gardens, creating especial database of his works. Many books have been recently published following the Association activity, about Porcinai' work in the south of Italy, in Arezzo , in Fiesole, in Emilia Romagna. Meetings and conferences have been promoted by the Association, and many new projects concerning Porcinai's work.

The prize to the Porcinai's Association and to Porcinai's Archive is for all these reasons , the best way of recognizing the importance of Porcinai' work and at the same time the best way of giving a tribute to the work of Anna and Paola and Giovanni Porcinai, to whom is arrived the responsibility of this precious heritage.

www.pietroporcinai.it

www.pietroporcinai.net

www.associazionepietroporcinai.org