

Ilaria Hoppe. *Die Räume der Regentin: Die Villa Poggio Imperiale zu Florenz*. Berlin: Reimer Verlag, 2011. 344 pp. €49. ISBN: 978-3-496-01442-3.

When Cosimo II de' Medici died in 1621, his mother, Christine of Lorraine, and wife, Maria Magdalena of Austria, became co-regents of Florence and the Grand Duchy of Tuscany, during the minority of eleven-year-old Ferdinand II. Based on a dissertation for the Technischen Universität Berlin in 2003, this comprehensive monograph chronicles the construction and decoration of what was officially called "Poggio Imperiale" ("Imperial Hill") in 1624, outside the southern city gate, of a scenic *villa suburbana* of classical retreat (*otium*) and ceremonial center of regency power in early Baroque Florence. Just the names of these co-regent patrons suggest the position of Grand Ducal Medici Florence between France and the Hapsburg Empire during the mid-sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as well as the vital transnational roles of major women patrons — such as Eleonora da Toledo, Catherine and Marie de' Medici, now Maria Magdalena of Austria — in the making of early modern Europe.

This volume contributes to recent scholarship on women patrons and gendered spaces ("the space of the regents"), adding another Medici villa to a powerful social network alongside modern bastion belvedere fortresses and city walls, a military-courtly urbanism overlooking the city and countryside, and connecting the larger grand-ducal territorial state in projectile perspective during a period viewed in "decline" — partly due to these "meddling regents" in the words of some modern historians — in what Eric Cochrane aptly called "the forgotten centuries of Florence" and indeed Italy. One might ask about the relationship of the French and Austrian co-regents in this patronage situation: Were they rivals? Did each advance rival "transnational" interests as well as cultural and political connections in this period of dynamic historical change during the Counter-Reformation and tragic Wars of Religion against the Protestants and Ottomans? Hoppe might explore the question of "contested patronage" in the documents and sources; but certainly the distinctive visual program of Medici-Hapsburg power at Poggio Imperiale suggests the predominance of Grand Duchess Maria Magdalena of Austria (as the author seamlessly argues) as the major patron in the villa's construction

and decoration after its purchase in 1622. In Hoppe's words, Poggio Imperiale became a "self-portrait of the Regent."

Daughter of Archduke Karl II of Austria and Archduchess Maria of Bayern, Maria Magdalena (b. 1587) entered Florence in 1608, after marriage treaty negotiations, through a temporary Roman triumphal arch at Porta al Prato on her way to wedding young Cosimo II, in the royal tradition of Francesco I and Giovanna of Austria in 1565, which initiated the Hapsburg Austrian alliance, resulting in the festive redecoration of the Palazzo Vecchio courtyard with imperial Austrian city views. Topography came with her. Architect and theater-designer Giulio Parigi designed Maria Magdalena's triumphal entry of 1608 in the learned humanist *all'antica Maniera* scenic-allegorical court theater style of Giorgio Vasari and Bernardo Buontalenti, with Hapsburg *istorie* from Holy Roman Emperor Charles V's "alliance" with Pope Clement VII de' Medici and his coronation in Bologna in 1530 through contemporary Hapsburg and supporting classical exempla. Triumphal entry became permanent, elaborated, and refocused on the Regent in Giulio Parigi's designs for the Villa Poggio Imperiale after 1622, a classical villa renovation of an earlier Baroncelli to Salviati, Medici, and Orsini family country house. Situated outside Porta Romana, and related to the Pitti Palace and *Oceanus* cross-axis of the Boboli gardens, the main Grand Ducal court residence, Poggio Imperiale served as a villa retreat, approached by a long processional cypress allée to a forecourt theater of ceremonial display. An austere Tuscan stucco facade with rhythmic rustic *pietra serena* window frames and monumental classical entry portal was crowned with a triumphal belvedere, sporting a Latin inscription to these "Hapsburg Etrurian rulers." Within, a symmetrical double apartment for guests on the left and the regents with son on the right were organized around a ceremonial hall and *galleria* above on the second floor, for family lineage portraits, a sequence of public to private spaces. The art collection was featured in inventories, beginning in 1625, including prominent portraits of the regent as St. Mary Magdalene by Justus Sutterman, an image of Counter-Reformation rulership, piety, and reform. One wonders if Artemisia Gentileschi's *Penitent Mary Magdalene* was displayed at the villa — an appropriate context. And the permanent fresco decorations featured programmatic series of Ancient, Old Testament, to Christian heroines and saints, one of the most extensive series since Christine de Pizan's *La Cité des Dames*. One could look for more extensive analysis of the formal *giardini segreti* to the sides and the *bosco* hunting park beyond the grounds, but this thoroughly researched monograph puts Poggio Imperiale on the map of Grand Ducal Florence, through its neoclassical remodeling and continued use by royal women patrons during the Austrian and French periods of the mid-eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries": a gendered precinct of ceremonial display, a royal "Dinner Party" of early modern Europe.

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