Inspired landscape, landscape inspiration, Italian influence on English picturesque gardens

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Abstract: Inspired landscape, landscape inspiration, an Italian influence on English picturesque gardens. The goal of this article is to show how paintings of an Italian Landscape have an influence on creation English picturesque gardens and to show how English Grand tourists came to know Italian landscape paintings and what made them so popular and influential on landscape design in England.

To understand that I will analyze English history of XVII century with special emphasis on the Grand Tour Movement – which had an influence on social behavior of an English Man. Next I will analyze works of the most popular Italian landscape painters: Lorrain, Poussin and Rosa, which paintings became a design templates for creating picturesque gardens in almost entire England.

Key words: Landscape that was inspired by art – paintings, Grand Tour, XVIII century landscape garden, Landscape painting, garden composition, garden components, Claude Lorrain, Nicolaus Poussin, Salvador Rosa.

INTRODUCTION

To document historic landscape best is to gather historic illustrations and iconographic materials. Nowadays, when for many places there are no plans, but only paintings, sketch and drawings are available, those became inspiration to recreate the history of the places, and this is how the inspired landscape is created. In garden history the most famous examples of “the inspired landscape” are English picturesque gardens, which composition and design is borrow from Italian Landscape Paintings of XVII century.

To understand how historic English landscape was created under the influence of Italian natural landscape I am going to explain the Grand Tour and the impact of English tourists, visiting Italy and rediscovering of the ancient civilization, on their own landscape. English travelers were always bring back memories and memorabilia to their own country and those had an enormous impact on the English society.

METHODS

Italian lanscape painting made the largest influence to create English lanscape gardens. The goal of this article is to show how paintings of an Italian Landscape have an influence on creation English picturesque gardens and to show how English Grand tourists came to know Italian landscape paintings and what made them so popular and influential on landscape design in England. To understand that I will analyze English history
of XVII century with special emphasis on the Grand Tour Movement – which had an influence on social behavior of an English Man. Next I will analyze works of the most popular Italian landscape painters: Lorrain, Poussin and Rosa, which paintings became a design templates for creating picturesque gardens in almost entire England.

The Grand Tour

The Grand Tour was a XVIII century, European high society traveling tradition to Italy and other European countries by young aristocrats¹ to complete their education and to create their own artistic taste. Also to create collections of art but most important to became to know in the society circles. Young aristocrats went to Italy to re-discover roots of the European culture: art and architecture of the cradle of the European Civilization².

Since 1720 Grand Tour was well established in English upper class society. A grand tour could last from several months to several years. It was commonly undertaken in the company of a knowledgeable guide or tutor. It became such a social ritual and duty that “Man who did not when to Italy, feel lower to the others who went” as Johnson said (Chaunu, 1993). The Grand Tour which also included visiting Venice was beautifully describe by Addison “In Italy man can see country’s … and in nature more amazing than ever else in Europe. (…) Amazes how Venice against the nature of Archimedes and Galileo, splashes from above the water” (Chaunu, 1993). The British idea of Venice as the “locus of decadent Italianate allure” made it an epitome and cultural set piece of the Grand Tour (Redford, 1996.)

After 1720 the nature of traveling started to shift from academically and art oriented to more social. For the young English man this trip was a great escape from a puritan society and boring English life. They went to find joy of life in the liveliness taverns and beautiful women. When they return to home they influence English society. They sought to bring piece of Italy to England. That is how England became to change and Italian Landscape started to influence English Landscape (Fig. 1).

In the end of trip young English man started to collect gifts for their family, as a way to try to express their gratitude for sponsoring their trip. However, they could not afford the art of famous artists like Raphael. Also, Italy did not let historic art to be taken from their own country. Copies of the original masterpieces became perfect substitute. XVII Century Italian Landscape paintings were great gifts and art of little know at that time French artists like: Claude Lorrain and Nicola Poussin and Italian – Salvador Rossa became very popular. Their art showed all of the places that were visited by Grand tourists, especially area near Rome – Campagne. Long after the death

¹ Not only travelers were drawn to Italy, but artists who wanted to study painting, sculpture, architecture. They portrate Italy during their visit (Kosiacka E., 2006).

² To fulfill their own education, young people went to the places known from history and literature. They started to collect art, and visited famous artist’s workshops and antique stores to learn art from the Italian masters. They started their own archeological excavation sites to enlarge their knowledge and collections. Collections brought back to England were rich in: drawings, paintings, sketches, sculptures with a main theme of the ancient world (Kosiacka E., 2006).
of these three artists, their art of the Italian Landscape was highly respected and admired.

English tourists started the fashion for picturesque gardens, by bringing the idealized visions of Italian landscape captured by art of Poussin and Lorrain into the English Gardens. They re-design their gardens accordingly to the pictures from Grand Tour and from the acquired paintings. This way they brought pieces of ancient world into the gardens. They created Palladian villas surrounded with Claude’s landscape, with stylized ancient temples and pavilions from areas around Tivoli like Temple of Sybil. The motives and influences taken from ancient Rome world were visible as well in the garden’s sculptures, columns, obelisks, pyramids, as in the manor house’s collections of: roman literature, interior decorations and Italian art – especially paintings (Figs 2, 3).

Garden design changed from formal to more natural and picturesque and with plenty new specimens of trees and shrubs brought from Grand Tour. The owners of the large collections of Italian art build the most spectacular XVIII century English Manor Houses mostly in Palladian style with luscious gardens. The most famous were: Lord’s Burlington Chiswick in Kent County, Henry’s Hoar Stourehead in Wiltonshire, Thomas’s Coke Holkham in Norfold and William’s Waddell Newby in Leicester. These upper class English society people were know and respected from their: intelligence, political aspirations, and influence. They represented the English class that thanks to their wealth received royal titles and social position. They emphasized their position in knowledge, education and power of building magnificent manor houses, surrounded by landscape gardens with classical elements of gardens buildings.

FIGURE 1. Painting Claude Lorrain “Landscape with Aeneas at Delos” the story of Aeneas and people of Troy traveling to Rome was an inspiration for the owner of Stourehead Manor (in: Wojciechowski, 1965, Z Dziejów malarstwa pejzażowego, Wydawnictwo Artystyczne i Filmowe, Warszawa)
FIGURE 2. The most beautiful view of Stourehead garden from paintings from the origin of the garden, artist unknown. Center located lake reflects nearby hills, trees and temples, similar to Claude Lorrain’s painting. The highest point in the garden is Temple of Apollo, with dome struck by the sunset. The path surrounding the lake is visible from that point—this path represents the Aeneas’s trip (in: Stourehead Landscape Garden, 1998, The National Trust, Londyn).

FIGURE 3. Present view of the garden, without changed design. Some of the views were lost due to overgrown plants material (author, 2002).
What was inspired by XVII century landscape painting art?

Discovery of XVII century landscape painting art had large influence in nature-based literature, initiated in England in XVIII century. For the visionaries and the theoretician Italian paintings became an ideal form of perfect landscape.

“Principle of picturesque beauty, popular in XVII century landscape paintings became a definition for landscape paintings. This rule set up standard for defining the landscape, which became framed and bounded by “accidental” rock formation, clumps of trees or shrubs. On the first plan were placed the most noticeable elements like: dry, cracked earth, rocks, trees (especially Oaks). Those elements contrasted each other due to: their shades, colors and forms. Important elements of

the first plan were animals, especially in odd numbers, cows rather than horses. Cows rough coat looks more interesting than smooth horse coat, but the best were curly shaggy looking sheep. Working people were not considered picturesque, except fisherman, whose nets became picturesque element. Also showing the leisure of shepherds, resting farmers were considered picturesque. The second plan contained rivers, buildings, and less visible elements, positioned irregularly.” (Krassowski, 1982).

Italian paintings showing idealized views of Rome set up an intriguing relation between proportions and elements, which were used to create English gardens. The place for body of water was proportionally distanced to hills and buildings (temples, bridges and ruins). Form of the buildings harmonized with natural elements of the landscape, like in the paintings were vistas and views were set up. The most important element in English picturesque garden was to capture the sense of the Italian landscape, with open fields and shaded, dark woodlands and symbolic grottos (Fig. 4).

In England Italian paintings were established as a “book” with many inspirational drawings for new landscape garden creators. The picturesque nature were shown in paintings of: Ross’s romantic and wild landscape, Poussin’s Rome ancient ruins and Lorrain’s full of sun classical landscapes. Arcadian landscape, filled with allegory and dramatic elements symbolized “the sense of nature’s variety”, and variety was the basic design criteria for the creators of the gardens. Landscape paintings became a tool for the intellectual people, to create new landscape with a value of the nature.

What inspiration brought Claude Lorrain’s landscape paintings?

Claude Lorrain (1600–1682) known from landscape paintings created new luminosity landscape\(^3\). As a first artist, he created landscape principles that referred to the light and the specific conditions of the day. In his paintings sunlight was shining through the fog, or was reflected in the body of water. The most famous are the landscapes of ports viewed from the distance, with surrounded architecture and small figures of people and trees. The composition of the paintings was nearly always the same with extension of the scene by planes or “coulisses” through near, middle, and far distance to infinity (Jellicoe, 1986). The center of the paintings was filled by sunlight or cloudy sky (Fig. 5).

Lorrain adapted the philosophy of the landscape painting through connecting landscape elements like: fields, meadows, streams, hills and architecture into one agreeable element. He became the true creator of picturesque landscape. His signature paintings were views of nature showed as an idealize landscape, disconnected from time and space. His sunset was the most often painted time of the day, with faded colors, especially with green light, which blends into the greenish body of water. Lorrian repeated his composition in many of his paintings, because motives of: sun, body of water were very popular at that time, however he tried to differentiate the subject by changing historical theme and create allegorical worlds (Fig. 6).

\(^3\) Luminosity landscape – masterful use of light in the art composition (Clark H.F., 1948).
“In some of Lorrian’s painting we can find inspiration from Poussin, but not intellect was the strongest gift of his, but subtle capability of creating poetic settings.” (Rzepinska, 1991).

The influence of Lorrain’s art was enormous, his paintings were an influence for artists like: Constable Turner or Gainsborough. The most important aspect of Lorrain’s legacy was for English people to discover natural landscape idea. In many cases elements of the English gardens are identical to the elements from painter’s art.
What inspiration brought Nicolas Poussin’s landscape paintings?

Poussin was born in Normandy, and was famous from his autodidactic. In 1624 left for Italy, were spend most of his working life in Rome, except for a short period when Cardinal Richelieu ordered him back to France to serve as First Painter to the King, were he painted allegories and religion scenes. The subjects of most of his art are: noble, grand, allegoristic scenes, influenced by ancient roman times or early Christian. This was based on homocentric doctrine of classic aesthetics, which forbidden landscape as a single theme for the art. Landscape could be only as a background for a large, important theme featured biblical or ancient scenes (Wojciechowski, 4).


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4 Nicolas Poussin (15 June 1594 – 19 November 1665) was a French painter in the classical style. Most of his life spend in Rome (Rzepińska M., 1991).
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1965). His work predominantly features clarity, logic, and order, and favors line over color (Fig. 7).

His theoretical interests gave him a name as a “philosophical painter”, who in is art tried to show historical truth. His approach to the art was very historically conscious, which was also weakening the power of his paintings. His art features balance between the composition and lines of human figures and surrounding landscape. Bright colors contrasted with dark earthy shadows and reddish pines.

In the latest years of his life the meaning of sky, trees and earth became stronger and the action was reduced to the minimum. The people were not longer important; their act was reduced to the form and color accents of the paintings. Poussin’s art was divided into two eras: first with dominance of action and people figures and second with dominance of landscape. In paintings with a landscape as a main theme Poussin emphases subtle problems of light, color, distance and scene. His love of nature is found in his study of large groups of trees. He did not paint from reality, but from his memories and dreams (Fig. 8). Classical silhouette of pines, cypresses, vineries can not be found, but rolling hills covered with soft green grass, woodlands, flooded rivers and ruins of villages without the specific geographical place were the theme of his art. Poussin painted his vision of Arcadia as an idealistic landscape. “Those landscapes are everlasting, with the same time of the year, somewhere between spring and summer, when the vegetation is lush and the weather is calm, temperature is mild and no wind disturbs tree branches or rain clouds” (Rzepińska, 1991).

FIGURE 8. Poussin’s painting illustrating landscape with a man washing his feet in the fountain became the most know for the coinsures of art in England. The painting’s composition was copied into the three dimensional dawn of Henry Hoar’s garden (in: Wojciechowski, 1965, Z Dziejów malarstwa pejzażowego, Wydawnictwo Artystyczne i Filmowe, Warszawa)
What inspiration brought Salvador Rosa’s landscape paintings?

“Float between heaven and earth” that how Salvador Rosa was described, he was an artist with fascinations and reservations. He discovered during his escapades the power of the nature, those thrilling impressions of monumental mountains, loud cascades stayed with him forever. As a painter, he is best known as an “unorthodox and extravagant” and a “perpetual rebel”. His busy and scandalous life gave him a nickname “friend of the outlaws” while hiding in the mountains. He began painting haunting landscapes, overgrown with vegetation, or jagged beaches, mountains, and caves. Rosa was among the first to paint “romantic” landscapes, with a special turn for scenes of picturesque often turbulent and rugged scenes peopled with shepherds, brigands, seamen, soldiers. They were placed in very dramatic landscape, with old twisted trees, ruins, rockeries and with dark overcasted sky. Scenarios from Rosa’s paintings illustrated literary visions of nature and were as an encouragement to travel and to discover the nature of the world. Rosa’s art was precisely captured in Walpole’s letters from Italy in 1739 were he writes “precipice, mountain, streams, wolves, rumbling – Salvator Rosa” (Clark, 1948).

SUMMARY

English tourists started the fashion for picturesque gardens, by bringing the idealized visions of Italian landscape captured by art of Poussin and Lorrain into the English Gardens. They re-design their gardens accordingly to the pictures from Grand Tour and from the acquired paintings. This way they brought pieces of ancient world into the gardens. They created Palladian villas surrounded with Claude’s landscape, with stylized ancient temples and pavilions from areas around Tivoli like Temple of Sybil. The motives and influences taken from ancient Rome world were visible as well in the garden’s sculptures, columns, obelisks, pyramids, as in the manor house’s collections of: roman literature, interior decorations and Italian art – especially paintings.

The success of Italian landscape painting was not only based on “picturesque composition but was the base for the newly created English garden landscape. Krassowski rightly states, “When we read the guidelines for the new picturesque landscape, clearly we discovered the status of the art was place upon the new creation of the English landscapes. Oaks were not only picturesque, but were valued for their wood for the English Marin, because sheep were uniquely scenic, English aristocrats eliminated crop fields to make a room for new meadows for their new profitable sheep business. Tree clumps and groupings were typical for the natural landscape of England. In mine opinion the art of the Italian landscape was the essential argument for the picturesque views. The English picturesque landscape was transformed from the original rural landscape after the relocation of local farmers. Thanks to the theory of picturesque landscapes old farmsteads changed their status and became use as a landscape parks for the property owners (Krassowski, 1982). Controversially is to compare the light of Italian landscape paintings to the light in England, that aspect could not be directly transformed. Seeing present English historic landscape, we can recognize that
was created under the influence of XVII century Italian landscape paintings.

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Wiele malarze, ich życie, inspiracje i dzieło.
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Streszczenie: Krajobraz inspirowany, inspiracja krajobrazem, czyli wpływ włoskiego malarstwa na kształtowanie angielskich ogrodów krajobrazowych. Rozważania podjęte w artykule mają na celu ukazać, jaki wpływ na kształtowanie się angielskich ogrodów krajobrazowych wywarło włoskie malarstwo krajobrazowe. Celem jest przybliżenie czytelnikowi w jaki sposób Anglicy zetknęli się z malarstwem włoskim i co było prawdziwą przyczyną tak wielkiej jego popularności. W tym celu zostaje podjęta próba analizy wydarzeń wieku XVII, z naciskiem na zjawisko Grand Tour, które zapoczątkowało przemiany w umysłach angielskich twórców. Poruszony został temat wielkich podróży i ich prawdziwej istoty jako problem dotychczas nieporuszany w polskiej literaturze. W dalszej kolejności analizie zostały poddane prace najbardziej popularnych twórców włoskiego malarstwa krajobrazowego XVII wieku (Lorrain, Poussin, Rosa), których obrazy stały się wzorem do tworzenia kompozycji ogrodowych niemal w całej Anglii.

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