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**Portuguese garden sculpture in the 17th and 18th centuries in the international context: an overview**

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## **ABSTRACT**

In this article I seek to give an overview of garden sculpture in Portugal between 1670 and 1822, identifying its main features and highlighting the most important gardens with sculptures such as the palace of Fronteira, the royal villa of Belém, the palace of Queluz, and the royal villa of Caxias, among others. The second very important point of this article is to point out the relationship of Portuguese garden sculpture within the European context identifying common features as well as the specificity of Portuguese Garden Sculpture.

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## **ARTICLE**

In this article I aim to demonstrate the character and features of Portuguese garden sculpture between 1670 and 1822 in relation with Portuguese historical context but also by comparing it with other European situations (based on RODRIGUES 2011a). Garden sculpture is the most international language of European gardens due to sculptures' exportation from Genoa and Holland to all European countries and to the circulation of models and iconography through treatises and literary sources, so in many cases garden sculpture in Portugal is part of the European family but in some others it has a very particular definition which comes from the specific construction material, their special relationship with water and their function.

The starting point of this study is that garden sculpture is a distinguished group of sculptures which share some aesthetical, morphological, iconographical, functional and technical characteristics and I have researched the specificities that could differentiate these sculptures from others since the moment of their creation until the moment of the reception, when the spectator is emotionally engaged by the sculpture in the unique *locus* which is the garden. I have considered all sculpture related with palaces and villas located in their courtyards, gardens and parks between circa 1670 until 1822 and gathered it onto a database of 135 gardens with sculpture in Portugal.

Garden sculpture in Portugal is the most erudite and the most international feature of Portuguese gardens because the grammar of sculpture is a European one. With the exception of northern sculpture in granite, garden sculpture in Portugal is mostly influenced by Italian and French models. In fact what gives an exotic character to our gardens is not the sculpture but mostly the horticulture with many botanical species coming from all parts of the world and wild animals kept in menageries, but also some features that still have an Islamic aura such as tiles, "alegretes", "embrechados" (rock-work) and water mirrors.

There are three main distinct groups of garden sculpture in Portugal: one group of imported sculpture in stone and lead from Italy, Holland and England; one group of garden sculpture created in Portugal but following the

Italian and French models and, finally, a group of Portuguese garden sculpture with a strong identity based on the material: garden sculpture in granite. All these groups can be associated with a specific period of time, but also with different commissions and a different geography. Thus, during these two centuries the leadership in garden sculpture commission was headed by different social groups. However, the profile of a patron of garden sculpture in Portugal is usually a noble, with a high level of culture, cosmopolitan, with international relationships, that liked to write, attended academies or promoted them in his own palace, with a rich library and usually, was also a collector. Commissions of garden sculpture in Portugal were made by an elite inside the elite who were most of the time the real creators of their own gardens and probably would supervise the work of artisans using their own libraries as a source of inspiration and taking from their books, prints and drawings models that they would give to artists and artisans.

There is no significant garden sculpture during the Renaissance in Portugal. If we recall the Italian context with gardens such as the Villa di Castello near Florence or the Villa d'Este in Tivoli, there is nothing in the 16<sup>th</sup> century in Portugal that can be compared with this. The most relevant Portuguese Renaissance villa named Quinta da Bacalhoa in Azeitão (south surroundings of Lisbon) which had some busts, but there is no evidence of a major presence of garden sculpture.

After the Restoration Wars (1640-1668) a new period for civil architecture and pleasure gardens took place in Portugal, with nobility looking for a new status close to the dynasty just created and, finally, garden sculpture had its opportunity in this country.

In fact, garden sculpture in Portugal appears connected with a specific international and national context and both seem to coincide with the 70's decade of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Although there is no study to prove the diffusion and impact of the great work the Sun-king was undertaking at Versailles<sup>1</sup>, it has already been pointed out by Cristina Castel-Branco that the prominence of Apollo in the gardens of Fronteira Palace is considered to be an echo of the role this Olympic god had in the gardens of Versailles (CASTEL-BRANCO 2008).

However, there was no consequence for Portuguese Royal commissions of garden sculpture. We do not know of any initiative by the kings D. João IV (1604-1656), D. Afonso VI (1643-1683) and D. Pedro II (1648-1706) related to gardens in the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. They have maintained the gardens that they have inherited, such as the garden of the palace of Ribeira, of the palace of Salvaterra de Magos, the palace of Alcantara (created by the Italian João Baptista Rovellasco whose debts made him lose it to the crown) and the famous garden at Vila Viçosa's palace, created for D. Catarina de Bragança (1638-1705). It was not only because of the war that royal gardens weren't created; it was also a question of taste. King D. João IV was very fond of music and was able to create one of the best libraries of music of his time. If he had felt for gardens what he felt for music, things might have been different. Thus, after the Restoration War, the *Grandes* (nobles with titles) played an inaugural role in the creation and diffusion of gardens with sculptures in Portugal.

Relative to the national context, the 70's decade of the 17<sup>th</sup> century was the period of regained independence for Portugal after twenty-eight years of the Restoration Wars against the Spanish, who had been ruling Portugal since 1580. In 1640 a group of nobles gathered around the duke of Braganza D. João and swore to fight for him and for the throne of Portugal until their death. After the war they would be rewarded with titles, properties, places, privileges and new incomes. Besides these means, the noble Houses were also disputing among themselves for certain status in the hierarchy of the nobility that was being formed during the post-Restoration period. In

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<sup>1</sup> However, the bride of king D. Afonso VI, Maria Francisca Isabel de Sabóia, duchesse of Nemours and Aumale, was cousin of King Louis XIV so Portuguese court was surely up-to-date with the great works undertaken by the French king.

this context the construction of new palaces with sumptuous gardens would play a very distinct part: they would represent the status of the House (family). To create these pleasure gardens the presence of pagan gods was obligatory, thus classic sculpture and fountains for the gardens were imported from Genoa and Holland.

The famous fountain of *Neptune* by Ercole Ferrata/Gianlorenzo Bernini which is now at the gardens of the National Palace of Queluz was a commission made by the 3<sup>rd</sup> Count of Ericeira on this occasion for his Palace of Anunciada in Lisbon's (DELAFORCE, MONTAGU, GOMES, SOROMENHO 1998: 804-811, VALE 2004: 161-178, VALE 2005: 36-62, VALE, 2007: 45-53, VALE 2008: 137-162, VALE 2010: 35-56 and RODRIGUES 2011b). The two fountains of *Hercules with the Hydra* imported from Genoa for the villa of the count of Aveiras in Belém, by then close to Lisbon, and the other for the palace of Palhavã of the count de Sarzedas were also commissions of this period (see VALE 2013 in this volume).

Other palaces with gardens à la *française* or imitating the most erudite Italian models were built beyond Lisbon and its immediate surroundings such as Quinta do General in Borba, a villa in the southern province of Portugal Alentejo, which clearly was inspired by the Villa d'Este (RODRIGUES 2011: 180-181). However, Diana de Éfeso's model was copied in a much cheaper material: clay. This is an artifice that is quite common in Portugal. D. Francisco de Sousa in his Villa of Calhariz also wanted to have a fountain by Bernini, of whom he had heard a lot from his uncle, who was the intermediate for the commission of the Fountain of Neptune to the Palace of Anunciada, but he ordered something much cheaper – a copy in clay of Bernini's fountain of Triton (RODRIGUES 2011: 179-180).



Water mirror at Palace of Fronteira

The best example of the construction of villas in this post-Restoration period is the Palace of Fronteira which is now in Lisbon but it was the summer villa of the Mascarenhas' family and was in the outskirts of Lisbon when it was built in the 17<sup>th</sup> century (see CASTEL-BRANCO 2008). After the 1755 earthquake when the family's palace in Lisbon was destroyed, the Mascarenhas moved into their former summer villa and have lived there ever since.

In the gardens of Fronteira Palace the sculpture program is a very erudite one and cannot be completely appreciated without understanding the tiles iconography. Although there is a clear political message, the artistic erudition of the program is worthy of a wider description. At the Gallery of Arts' terrace, presided over by a statue of Apollo, god of music and the arts, and another of Marsias, evoking the episode of the musical contest between the god and the shepherd, there are also statues of the seven planets intermingled with panels of tiles with allegories of the liberal arts. At the bottom of this balcony there is a little chapel where Saint Francis is supposed to have prayed before going to India and which is usually considered the most ancient element of the villa that existed already in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. However the decoration of the chapel narthex is mostly rock-work and inside it is in the rococo style. At a lower level there is a Summer House (called in Portuguese language "Casa de Fresco") which is considered the best example extant of a built structure totally covered by glasses, ceramics, shells and little colorful stones. In front of this Summer House there is a small lake with two sculptures, a *putto* on a dolphin and a *putto* on a water-dog similar to the ones shown in *Hortus Palatinus* (1620) by Salomon de Caus. This erudite source seems to have been used again at the Venus' pedestal fountain although the sculpture of Venus is quite similar to a *Ceres* of the Boboli garden which seems reasonable because this was the ladies' garden and for noble women fertility, a quality proper to agriculture's goddess, was the main goal. The connection with the Great Parterre is through the Gallery of Kings composed of busts inside niches of all the Portuguese kings since D. Afonso Henriques until D. Pedro II, without including the Spanish kings because this was built just after the Restoration War and the conflict with Portuguese neighbors was still very recent. On the other side, this series includes the count D. Henrique, father of the first Portuguese king and also Infant D. Fernando, left to die in Morocco and who was later considered a saint. Through two lateral staircases there is access to the Great Parterre, and in between there is a water mirror surrounded by tile panels with equestrian portraits of chevaliers. Seen from the Great Parterre, the message is clear: nobility sustains royalty and monarchy exists while there are nobles to support it. The lead statues on pedestals of classical subjects at the Great Parterre were originally painted in black with golden heads. Gardens, as in all of Europe, are privileged places to display copies of the most famous sculptures from Antiquity as there are in Fronteira's great *parterre*. In Portuguese gardens, *Venus of Medici*, *Flora Farnesio*, *Hercules Farnesio*, *Dancing Faun* are the copies in lead or stone, imported or of national manufacture that can be found in Portuguese gardens.

Very recently we have discovered that at Fronteira some statues have the same composition as some gilded lead sculptures at the Herrenhausen Garten in Hannover. Both groups of sculptures were bought in Holland by the Larson's family (RODRIGUES and CLARK 2013 to be presented). Garden sculpture of marble imported from Genoa and of lead imported from Holland as concentrated in Lisbon's gardens and villas and in its surroundings, reveals an up-to-date taste and erudite sources confirming it as international art.

Only with King D. João V, for whom Louis XIV was a model to follow in every aspect, royal gardens with sculpture appeared in Portugal, such as the villas of Belém (CASTEL-BRANCO and GOMES 2005; RODRIGUES 2011a: 127-130), Mafra (RAIMUNDO 1997; RODRIGUES 2011a: 125-127) and Necessidades (REAL 1983; FERRÃO 1994; CASTEL-BRANCO 2001; RODRIGUES 2011a: 131-133). Even if nowadays it is very difficult to recognize it, in all these villas existed gardens à la *française* full of statues. In Mafra there existed a *parterre* with twenty-six statues and antique vases in white marble. In Belém there existed already the famous theatre with the group of *Hercules and the Hydra*, bought in Italy by the former owner of the villa, the count of Aveiras, but the *Death of Cleopatra* and the



Lake at Calhariz' villa

*Roman Charity* which are now at the Tropical Botanic Garden, had been bought by King D. João V for the Royal Villas of Belém. At the last huge complex ordered by King D. João V – Necessidades - the sculpture helps to create a new micro-villa, namely with the obelisk-fountain in the square in front of the church which helps to recreate a very baroque Roman feature in Lisbon, with the *Four Winds* evoking the *Four Rivers* fountain by Bernini.

In the convent's garden seven statues (now disappeared) represented the seven virtues and were located inside niches covered with blue tiles, the same colour that we find in tiles painted for Fronteira's palace. Both Courtils and Tollemare mention these statues as having a dimension superior to the human body (RODRIGUES 2011a: 131-133). But side by side with this religious context there is a profane one where we can still find classical subjects such as a *Faun* and a *River-God* inside niches with little cascades and fountains with *rocaille* suggesting groves.

Despite all the efforts and intentions of King D. João V, it was in fact only his son King D. Pedro III who succeeded in creating a garden inspired by the model of Versailles, in his hunt lodge at Queluz (PIRES 1925-1926; GUEDES 1971; AFONSO and DELAFORCE 1989; FERRO 1998; NETO and GRILO 2005; RODRIGUES 2011b: 45-121). It was because of him that the spirit of a garden à la *française* succeeds not only in Queluz, but also in Caxias. At Queluz it is possible to see the composition and some of the sculpture's models of Marly, Vaux-le-Vicomte and Versailles. What is different in Queluz from Versailles is the function because this was not conceived as a royal house (D. Pedro was by then the lord of the House of Infantado) and not even the king projected himself into the garden as King Louis XIV did, but there are also some visual and compositional differences. In the French model the aim to reach the horizon was completely achieved with the creation of the water channel of huge dimensions. At Queluz there is no water channel but a cascade at the bottom of the main axis that departs from the palace and more, after the Fame's portal because of the topography it is impossible to have the sensation of dominating the horizon. Nevertheless, there are some similarities between the sculptures of both gardens. There is a higher concentration of sculptures at Queluz than in Versailles or other gardens that have used this model, mostly due to the smaller dimension of the garden. But, many statues bought to John Cheere's studio are inspired by Versailles' models such as groups with children playing; the Rape of Proserpine by Bernini which was copied by François Girardon in Versailles and was equally copied in Queluz by John Cheere. Robbillion had worked there, but when he arrived the sculptures had

already been bought to John Cheere's studio in London, and the sculptor and silversmith that became an architect is only responsible for their distribution, not for the commission and selection of subjects. Although there are only twenty-two lead sculptures by John Cheere at Queluz about ninety painted or gilded lead statues were bought to the sculptor's studio, this being the largest group of John Cheere's lead sculptures outside England. The influences remained Italian, because many of these lead sculptures are copies of classical models as well as modern such as the copies of Giambologna's groups. Beyond this, the Fame's portal has two equestrian statues similar to the ones at the garden of Marly.

Queluz represented the triumph of garden sculpture because it was almost a compendium of different typologies and materials of sculptures with lead sculptures coming from England<sup>2</sup>, stone sculptures coming from Genoa and even gilded and painted wooden sculptures made *in situ* that had decorated many pavilions set all along the water channel and at the top of the monumental cascade.

One of the most attractive and strongly identifying features of Portuguese garden sculpture comes from its relationship with water: the particular character of jets of water and the sound produced by them are clearly a legacy of the Islamic tradition. When we compare the water jokes in Latone's fountain at Versailles with 'Thetys' fountain in Queluz it is clear that the hydraulic resources were not the same but also the way to benefit from water in gardens followed totally different traditions. This is not only recognizable in water jokes but also in water mirrors. It should be also underlined that one of the most original features in Portuguese gardens is the design of lakes.



Necessidades' obelisk-fountain

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<sup>2</sup> Lead sculptures were gilded or painted "as natural" although there are none in this condition nowadays. But we can have an idea of how they were because the painted Shepherd (c. 1735) by John Cheere in Fenton House, England, is still painted.



Royal Villa of Caxias

Forms similar to classical gardens such as the peristyle garden of Domus dos Repuxos (Jets of Water) can be found at Quinta do Bonjardim (Bonjardim's villa); or baroque forms can be seen at Quinta do Calhariz (Calhariz' villa); or forms inspired by silverware can be seen at the National Palace of Queluz. All villas have huge tanks near buildings and the spreading jets of water still show the Islamic influence. No water jokes exist as in Italy or France and I do not think the only reason is hydraulic resources, although this might be part of the explanation, but one of taste.

The other villa with sculptures ordered by King D. Pedro III is the Royal Villa of Caxias. But the situation was now completely different. After importing garden sculpture into Portugal with foreign signatures such as Ercole Ferrate/Bernini, Giuseppe Gaggini, Inácio Peschiera, Bernardo Sciaffino, Giuseppe Mazzuoli, Bernardino Ludovisi, Pierre Mignard, and the biggest group of English lead sculptures outside England by John Cheere, there was finally a Portuguese sculptor able to receive such a commission. Joaquim Machado de Castro who after making the Poets busts for the villa of the Marquis of Pombal in Oeiras and some mythological statues for the royal villas of Belém, makes the most interesting group of clay sculptures of natural size painted in white to imitate stone, to set on a monumental cascade at the royal villa of Caxias (RODRIGUES et al. 2009) depicting Diana and Actéon, inspired by the Palazzo Reale di Caserta, near Naples. Technically speaking these garden sculptures had the interior full of tubes to have jets of water coming out of them and these were probably the most interesting water jokes created by a Portuguese sculptor. There is no other group of clay sculpture in Portugal with a dimension such as this one, but it is not the only example: in Sintra and in the south of Portugal it was a recurring solution. Clay is a resistant material also often used in Italian garden sculpture as we can observe in Villa Gamberaia or Villa Garzoni, among others.

Other Portuguese artists have made garden sculpture, such as Manuel Alves, Filipe da Costa and Silvestre Faria Lobo who worked in Queluz; José Joaquim de Barros who made the Fame for the Quinta de Belas' obelisk; Francisco Leal Garcia who worked at Queluz and Palace of Seteais; and Faustino José Rodrigues who made sculptures for many villas in Sintra and for the Royal Villa of Bemposta. However, the Portuguese sculptor who distinguishes himself is the Royal sculptor Joaquim Machado de Castro.

Garden sculpture in Portugal is a unique universe of experimentation where boundaries between sculptor, architect, painter, gardener, engineer and silversmith are difficult to define. Theoretically, the landscape-gardener would design the garden, then he would say to sculptors what he needed to decorate the garden, masons would execute statues and fountains; and painters would finish them. However we know of other examples like this. The lack of specialization is evident. José Rodrigues



Copy of the group of Spring at the Royal Villa of Caxias

Ramalho, a sculptor, but also a gardener at the palace of Salvaterra de Magos whose career has always moved between a sculptor of wooden images and landscape architect. The renowned painter Cyrillo Wolkmar Machado who designed the villa of Belas; the painter Francisco Vieira Lusitano who drew garden sculptures for Alexandre Gusmão's garden; the architect of the Royal House Manuel Caetano de Sousa and the naturalist Domingos Agostino Vandelli and the gardener Mattiazzi who conceived the Botanic Garden of Ajuda have all been involved in the creation of garden sculptures. Most drawings by architects do not have the detailed location of the sculptures distribution, sometimes only the lakes. So, is sculpture thought of by them? It seems the answer is negative. However, the distribution of sculptures in the *parterre* and in some places is so perfect that it had to be planned as a whole. Maybe ideas had been changed orally.

The materials most used in garden sculpture are marble and lead, but in North Portugal almost all sculptures are in granite. And this is something absolutely unique in international terms, not only because the proper and desired stone for garden sculpture is marble, but also because granite is an especially hard stone to work for sculpture. However it is the most common stone in the north of Portugal and we verify that this option for cheaper materials is a solution that was already used in southern Portugal with different results such as the use of painted clay to imitate stone. Countrywide production is very connected with regional materials with a predominance of granite in the north and the use of clay in the south, as well as marble, for example in the region of Elvas and Estremoz, still nowadays one of the most important places for extraction of marble.



The identity of northern Portuguese garden sculpture is conveyed by the material – the granite – and the possibilities it gives for sculpture. A typical color of grey is used like a frame to all architectonic devices and gardens are also benefit by use of this colour and the voluptuous forms it offers. Probably because it is very hard to work in fine forms there is not much of statuary but it is particularly interesting when used in lakes, portals and fountains, except at the bishop's garden in Castelo Branco ordered by D. João de Mendonça who created a complex program, very erudite microcosms full of statues based on his library's books such as by Bernardo de Brito's *Elogios dos Reis de Portugal* or Manuel Bernardes' *Exercícios Espirituais* (RIBEIRO and AZEVEDO 2001; RODRIGUES 2011a: 149-155). The great difference between commissions that come from bishops or from nobles for private palaces is the prominence of religious subjects in the first group. In this microcosm the iconological program gathers profane aspects of the world with depictions of Good and Evil, Paradise and Hell. There is also a correspondence between Earthly questions and Celestial ones, such as the relation established in the staircases between the Portuguese kings and the Apostles. The composition of the *parterre* resembles the great *parterre* of the Palace of Fronteira with sixteen compartments. Nevertheless, instead of the classical sculptures over the pedestals there are allegories of the twelve months, four parts of the world and seven virtues besides those directly connected with religious spirituality. And if in plastic terms these sculptures seem to have less quality, in fact the technical quality of some angels is very high, taking into account the material from which they are made.

Garden sculpture remains one of the most erudite features of Portuguese gardens and without any doubt one that demonstrates a proximity to the European family. In the seventeenth century it was mostly imported from Italy, France and Holland and was set in the *parterres* created as rooms in the open air, inhabited day and night with statues. We consider this commission up-to-date with European standards', probably due to the cosmopolitan character of the patrons and their international connections but also because of the erudition of their libraries containing copies of important artistic treatises and other artistic literature. Then it develops its own character strongly connected with the materials available: garden sculpture made in Portugal tries to follow Italian and French models in composition and iconography but using local materials and economic solutions. But it will also stand out in architectonic sculpture with heraldry promoting the House and elevating the family status at the same time that a pleasurable *locus* is being created.

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