

Preface

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This volume has its origins in the PALATIUM colloquium ‘Looking for Leisure. Court Residences and their Satellites, 1400–1700’, organised in Prague from 5 to 7 June, 2014.

Founded in 2010 and financed for five years by the European Science Foundation, the PALATIUM research networking programme aimed at creating a common forum for research on the late medieval and early modern European court residence or palace (palatium) in a multi and trans-disciplinary perspective (www.courtresidences.eu). The world of the courts 1400-1700 constituted a network of truly European scale and international character. In the broad and varied field of court studies, PALATIUM’s focus on the court residence stands out as a main defining characteristic, distinguishing it clearly from similar initiatives in Europe. Fourteen research institutions from eleven European countries supported this programme, including the Institute of Art History of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, which organised the Prague colloquium together with the Department of Art History at Masaryk University of Brno. We sincerely thank them both, and in particular their representatives Ivan Prokop Muchka and Ondřej Jakubec for their efforts in making the event a success and in bringing its results to the broader scientific community. In addition, special thanks are due, as always, to the members of the PALATIUM Steering Committee who helped to select contributors and to the PALATIUM coordinator Pieter Martens, who served as guardian angel to the event. Last but not least, without Sylva Dobalová’s unstinting efforts there would have been no colloquium and no book at all.

To quote from the original call for papers, the aim of the colloquium was to draw attention to ‘small’ buildings in residential complexes, which were meant only for rest, leisure, and repose. Many of the case-studies discussed here – from the Trianon de porcelaine at Versailles to the Troja Palace at Prague – show that ‘small’ is a relative term in this context, both as to size and artistic weight. The importance of the casino, palazzotto, speelhuys, zámeček, Lusthaus and banqueting house in the network of satellite buildings connected with the main palace is amply demonstrated in the seventeen essays assembled in this volume. They collectively illustrate the architectural face of early modern theories of leisure; the ambiguity of type between town and country living; the complexity of the residential system at early modern courts; and the art showcased on this particular architectural stage.

The subject could not be more relevant in the PALATIUM perspective. Like the palace, the Renaissance and Baroque villa have generated a flood of scholarly publications in the last five decades, as has the art of the garden and the culture of the hunt. The picture, however, remains far from complete. The residential system of the European courts and the nobility cannot be adequately defined by the classic opposition of town/country or palace/castle, to which in the early modern era is added the villa, suburban or pseudo-rural. The culture of leisure, already in full development at the late mediaeval courts, called for new architectural types beyond this standard conjunction. While Joseph Furttentbach’s 1640 *Architectura recreationis* is the first to define the palazzotto, the phenomenon has deeper roots in time, as some of the papers show. And the typological complexity of the late mediaeval and early modern court residence – always to be taken as a ‘plural’ – mirrors the nomadic character of much of contemporary court life: a constant migration dictated by the necessities of politics and by the seasons.

The architecture of leisure has changed beyond recognition in the last century, along with the place of leisure in society and with the advent of mass tourism, its scale. But a significant part of today’s seasonal migrations is still directed towards the magnificent places of leisure created centuries ago for the courtly élite. In that sense their genius loci has not lost much of its power. In publishing these papers online we hope that they will reach a broad audience interested in this important part of our common European heritage.