



“Site-Specificity at the Fattoria di Celle.” In *Art in Arcadia: The Gori Collection*, Celle. Torino: Umberto Allemandi & C., 1994; pp. 33-49.

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## SITE-SPECIFICITY AT THE FATTORIA DI CELLE

ROBERT HOBBS

ALTHOUGH THE TERM “site-specific” has been used for many sculptures dating from the 1960s to the present, some of the earliest examples of this art focused on such anonymous spaces as art galleries and rooms in museums. Many of these works were made by minimalists and conceptualists who questioned the hegemony of formalist criteria and the supremacy of the art object. Although some of these artists, including Robert Morris and Sol LeWitt, later created pieces at the Fattoria di Celle, the park itself became an important component of their sculpture as it has been for all who have been commissioned to work in this Romantic garden.

Because a Romantic garden is a highly artificial construct posing as wilderness, the park at Celle has offered artists an opportunity to create pieces that question the Romantic concept of a pure unadulterated nature and at the same time reinscribe aspects of the industrialized world it so carefully eschewed. At Celle nature is a slipping signifier of central importance to all the installations carried out in the park. In this essay I will begin with a brief overview of site-specific art, which was actually site-nonspecific at the beginning. I will examine then the works at Celle to show how artists have both collaborated with the site and at times undermined it.

In spite of using industrial materials and getting rid of metaphoric meanings in favor of clear and direct confrontations with objects and their immediate environments, Minimalism is not site-specific. Robert Morris’s instructive Green Gallery installations of the early 1960s, for example, could have taken place in any number of similar white, self-effacing rooms without being compromised. His sculptures required neutral spaces that matched the pared-down quality of his plywood constructions. Similar anonymous spaces were also required for Dan Flavin’s neon sculptures and Sol LeWitt’s early wall drawings. These works did not define a specific locale so much as they established a set of propositions about the essentials necessary for art to exist. A unique space would have upset the balance and transformed these reductive sculptures into minor gestures, and the pieces would have lost the dialectical tension between the inert object and the blank, anonymous space essential for perceiving them. Even though Morris wanted to emphasize actual as opposed to vir-

tual space, Donald Judd specific objects and Carl Andre a non-architectural and nonhierarchical space, they all created sculptures in the 1960s that are most clearly understood when they are seen in anonymous, white rooms.

One might think that this anonymity would have been overturned in Robert Smithson's Earthworks, but instead this artist perpetuated it. His "Nonsites" are dislocated boundary markers that refer to broken-down systems, strip-mined plots or land fill areas composed of sections of ripped-up highway and rubble. Although his "Spiral Jetty" in the Great Salt Lake is located near the Golden Spike Monument that commemorated the first transcontinental railway, now no longer in operation, this piece is only tangentially and retrospectively site-specific because Smithson had originally considered creating it in a red salt lake in Bolivia. Soon after its creation, the "Spiral Jetty" was covered over with water and thus became another Nonsite as the artist knew it would. Smithson's "Nonsites" are critical of the belief in progress through technology and the idea of subduing the planet earth and conquering outer space.

While Smithson was wary of technology in works that mirrored the "Nonsites" of late industrialism, shortly after his death a number of artists began to make sculptures that deemed a sense of place important. Instead of extolling dislocation and disjunction – attitudes prevalent in art since cubism – site-specific artists seemed to be reinforcing the uniqueness of distinct locales<sup>1</sup>. They took their minimalist forms and industrially fabricated materials into the landscape and began to accept actual climatic and geological conditions. Occasionally they adhered to the new prevailing *ethos* of ecological thinking. Once again art seemed to be affirming a sense of place; and the age of alienation appeared to be over at long last as artists created works directly inspired by the landscape. Land reclamation art was thus considered representative of a new, calmer and more human era, and some of it certainly was.

And yet the idea of once again being wedded to the land or to a specific location appears on close scrutiny not to be a part of the most trenchant site-specific art. The term "site-specific" is more iro-

<sup>1</sup> In the past decade there have been a number of studies of site-specific art. Among the most important are the following:

J. BEARDSLEY, *Earthworks and Beyond: Contemporary Art in the Landscape*, Abbeville Press, New York 1984;

H. M. DAVIES and R. J. ONORATO, *Sitings: Alice Aycock, Richard Fleishner, Mary Miss, George Trakas, ex-*

hibition catalogue, La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art, La Jolla (Cal.) 1986;

A. SONFIST (ed.), *Art in the Land: A Critical Anthology of Environmental Art*, E. P. Dutton, New York 1983;

R. HOBBS, *Robert Smithson: Sculpture*, Cornell University, Ithaca 1981 (with additional essays by L. Alloway, J. Coplans and L. Lippard).

nic than critics have been willing to admit. This art developed in part out of a concerted effort to break the deadlock of High Modernism by relating meanings to distinct contexts rather than considering them universal and transcendent. As its name suggests, “site-specific art” does enter into a relationship with a particular locale, and its meaning depends on geological factors, land use and historical associations. Although it is sometimes regarded as idealistic in its attempt to get beyond the rootlessness of modern society by reestablishing relationships within a specific place, this art often is concerned with evaluating both the site and the present-day quest to return to a pure unadulterated nature. Site-specific art develops out of a 1960s cultural critique of late industrial capitalism that was undertaken by a number of groups including hippies and advocates of alternative life styles, but unlike the nostalgic and reactionary attitudes of these groups, this art often subjects nature to doubt. Many site-specific artists agreed with Robert Smithson’s desire to comprehend the system through which he was being threaded. Thus they looked for ways to work outside the limits of the gallery world, where art was regarded as a rarefied commodity in order to critique aspects of modern life.

Heirs to a tradition of modernist critical thinking, many site-specific artists have tended to safeguard their dialectical approach. Rather than being seduced by the romantic appeal of nature or the seeming comforts of pastoral areas, they have looked at them with an aim to reevaluate them. Their works are thus more question marks inserted in the landscape than affirmations of it. Although a number of people have wanted to view site-specific sculpture as the artistic counterpart of sound ecological planning, this art frequently critiques its locale. The site becomes a subtext for the art, and the art is a palimpsest in which traces of the site, its past and present functions are still apparent. To understand a site-specific piece, then, one needs to look at the way these traces open the work to a range of meanings. The site does not simply become part of the art. While it serves as the art’s *raison d’être*, the site is part of a dialectic: a thesis to the antithesis represented by the site-specific piece.

In Postmodern art the work’s relation to its site is complex. Taking Jean-François Lyotard’s definition of the postmodern condition as “incredulity towards the meta-narrative”<sup>2</sup>, one might say that trenchant site-specific art is postmodern. It is more concerned with

<sup>2</sup> J. F. LYOTARD, *The Postmodern Condition*, Manchester University Press, Manchester 1984.

doubt than with affirmation. This art is critical not only of its locale but also itself and its ability to generate a significant discourse through the limited formal means available to it. Postmodern site-specific art represents, then, a profound crisis of meaning and at the same time a sense of excitement regarding its highly critical role vis à vis the environment.

At the Fattoria di Celle this new critical mode is of paramount importance. In the past decade artists at the Fattoria have created works of art that establish symbolic discourses with the Romantic garden designed by the Pistoian landscape architect Giovanni Gambini in the 1840s. Or they have worked with a number of contexts that include the Tuscan landscape, the villa, which was renovated in 1690 for Cardinal Carlo Agostino Fabroni and reputedly designed by the Florentine Giovanni Maria Ferri, and the traditional Tuscan farm buildings surrounding this impressive villa. Once viewers are aware of the important ways that the garden can contribute to the site-specific sculpture located there, they begin to regard even the impressive collection of Futurist, Novecento, and Modernist art housed in the main living areas of the Fattoria di Celle's historic buildings in a new reciprocal manner, by seeing how the art critiques other works of art in the collection and at times the buildings themselves. Thus site-specificity, first clearly apparent in the garden, informs ultimately all the art at Celle, making this museum-residence an interactive situation. In this outdoor and indoor museum, nothing is decontextualized, or allowed to exist outside a specific historical and geographic environment. Thus works of art at Celle can be considered objects of study in their own right, and they also can be regarded as special lens for examining either other works of art or the landscape itself. This quality of both reabsorbing and redirecting the viewer's gazes is heralded at the entrance to the Fattoria by a large imposing Alberto Burri sculpture that memorializes the industrial aesthetic while framing views of the Tuscan plains. At Celle the art is informed, critiqued, transformed and viewed in terms of its surroundings, including other works of art in the collection and, on occasion, in terms of the personality of the Fattoria's impresario Giuliano Gori.

In order to understand the uniqueness of this collection and its importance for late twentieth-century artistic thinking, it is essential to begin with Gambini's garden, because it is the real/artificial construct that provides artists with the opportunity to interrogate the role of nature in the modern world.

Gambini's park is a picturesque landscape<sup>3</sup>. As such, it is influenced by the landscape paintings of the seventeenth-century artists Claude Lorrain, Nicolas Poussin and Salvator Rosa. At times these painters speculated about Arcadia, the pastoral region in ancient Greece that appealed to Latin poets and the later Renaissance painters Giorgione and Titian. They found ancient ruins romantic and delighted in sudden variations in both the climate and in the land itself. Landscape served as an imaginative trail leading them to an idealized realm, consisting of a blissful bucolic life or a slightly terrifying world that excited them with its sublimity and power. Their art was involved in the artifice of wistful thinking about a redolent past. Although it appears natural, it is highly encoded and far removed from reality. When Gambini subscribes to the picturesque in his garden, as any number of romantics did before him, he models nature on painting. Predicated on the picturesque his nature is placed within quotation marks; it is a simulation, not a reality. It is a fabricated wilderness, an illusion composed of real elements that intends to perfect rather than reform nature by appearing wilder than even virgin terrain. Although Gambini's garden is certainly constructed of earth, rocks, water and plants, it was made to conform to the then prevailing aesthetic of the picturesque which demanded grottoes, waterfalls and ruins as well as changing scenery marked by pastoral areas, dark groves, placid ponds, special mooring areas, rustic bridges, secret hideaways and special vantage points that serve to frame nature in much the same manner that Lorrain, Poussin, and Salvator Rosa composed scenes on canvas. The artistic status of Gambini's park is central to our discussion of recent site-specific sculpture at Celle, because the garden is a shifting signifier that oscillates between the natural and the artificial.

Rather than attempting to create seamless reconstructions of wild, untouched areas, Romantic garden designers seem to have delighted in the artificiality of their productions which became, in essence, stage sets. Strategically placed among the flora, their constructed ruins serve the important function of cueing visitors into this completely orchestrated artifice. These ruins provide a perspective for viewing less obvious conceits such as waterfalls, plantings arranged in casual groupings and simple paths that look as if they had been formed by animals who for centuries have wandered through the

<sup>3</sup> The standard sources on the picturesque are as follows:

C. L. HUSSEY, *The Picturesque: Studies in a Point of View*, G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York 1927;  
U. PRICE, *Essays on the Picturesque*, London 1810.

woods and along the banks of streams and ponds. Gambini's composite Egyptian/Syrian cenotaph for example, encourages visitors first to consider what an elaborate conceit an artificial ruin actually is, and then to consider nature itself as a precious remnant of another time and also as an artistic construct. This conjunction of nature and culture was elaborated in the eighteenth-century art of Canaletto, Guardi and Hubert Robert, who were all fond of picturing vines and plants growing out of toppled-over arches and decaying city walls as they actually still do in Italy and other parts of Europe. When these gardens of ruins enter the realm of art, they become eminently metaphoric and symbolize generative and redemptive aspects of the past which is still capable of providing nurturance.

Site-specific artists working in the past decade in the garden at Celle have been intrigued, as we shall see, with the natural/artificial dichotomy of the Romantic landscape and have created works that question the Romantic idea of nature that has achieved such wide currency over the past century that it has come to be regarded as synonymous with nature itself. Their art, in other words, is post-modern in its emphasis on doubt as a responsible critique of the so-called "natural" in the modern world. It leaves one with a distinct feeling that an external nonacculturated nature is simply a figment of society's imagination – a beautifully idealistic and preposterous dream. Their works become playful critiques that puzzle, beguile, deconstruct, and reaffirm the natural/artificial oppositions found in the garden.

One of the first pieces conceived for Celle is "Line 1-2-3" by Dani Karavan, who inserts in the garden a work underscoring its main axis. His line of site initiates the project of deconstructing and re-presenting the park. When considered in relationship to an overall plan of the garden, this piece indicates a general north/south orientation that Gambini wanted to obscure. In this white sculpture so at odds with nature, Karavan makes explicit this underlying rationality. When he emphasizes the park's original orientation, camouflaged even more by design and a century and a half of largely uninhibited growth, Karavan provides the garden with a fixity that Romanticism tried to avoid. While his art is not postmodern, it can be considered post-structural in its emphasis on deconstructing the artificiality of the Romantic garden.

The rationalist orientation of Karavan's piece is reinforced by the other sculptures in the park, particularly the works by Richard Serra, Ulrich Ruckriem, and Joseph Kosuth. Serra's "Open Field Vertical Elevations", which is also situated on the north end, is intended

to measure a hill's ascent but instead plays on its ambiguities<sup>4</sup>. For the first time in his career, Serra decided to work with stone rather than metal. He chose large blocks of local stone which exhibit a mixture of industrial cuts and naturally modulated surfaces. These blocks oscillate between appearing remnants of an ancient dolomic culture and Minimalist projections on the landscape. Although Serra strongly disclaims historical references in his art and asserts an aim simply to make the logic of the field's rising elevation apparent, his work begins to take on a picturesque quality when it is considered in relation to Gambini's garden and the old Tuscan farmhouse adjacent to it. It may be that the colombino stone constituting this sculpture accords so well with the landscape that it accrues associations which Karavan's austere horizontal lines shun. With this piece Serra's art becomes more accessible and open to the environment than it was before. His installation at Celle becomes involved in a tug of war between modern technology and ancient ruins. It is the modern equivalent of Gambini's cenotaph, a shifting signifier that eludes even the artist's attempt to force it into a narrow and confining pigeon-hole.

This unavoidable discourse with the park also affects Ulrich Ruckriem's untitled sculpture of *pietra serena*. Conceived in the quasi-minimalist style for which Ruckriem has become renowned, this plinth, which has been broken and recombined, takes on a Romantic quality at Celle. In the garden the sculpture appears to be less concerned with analyzing form in its constituent parts than with preserving itself through time. It blends into its environment and looks like an ancient megalith that has remained in the woods.

While both Ruckriem and Serra are unable to maintain a rational discourse with the landscape and to ignore its picturesque qualities, Joseph Kosuth takes a different tact and establishes a dialogue with Romanticism. For "Modus Operandi Celle" he chose one of the most picturesque sections of the garden. In the middle of the large pond at Celle there is a small island which can only be reached by boat. On approaching the island, visitors discover a rocky mooring area within a cave. After parking the boat, they ascend a set of steps leading to the island itself where there is a small domed tempietto, decorated with a flamboyant gothic finial, that encloses a "Medici" style Venus supported by dolphins. Although this ensemble

<sup>4</sup> Please note that all references to the artists' attitudes regarding their sculptures for Celle are taken from statements on file in Celle's archives.

These statements are reproduced in this book in the installation section.



represents the Classical world that supposedly contrasts with the dark Romantic entrance to the island, its position is carefully conceived to provide the satisfying sense of discovery that is part of the experience of a picturesque landscape. Into this Romantic/Classical realm, Kosuth has inserted a double thickness of glass that divides the island in half and prevents visitors from approaching the tempietto. On the glass he has etched the title of his piece together with the following statement by Nietzsche: "The things themselves, which only the limited brains of men and animals believe fixed and stationary, have no real existence at all. They are the flashing and sparks of drawn swords, the glow of victory in the conflict of opposing qualities".

This passage, a piece of disrupted logic, separates the Classical and the Romantic realms of the island and keeps viewers from coming in contact with the ideal static realm of classical thought which is alluded to, even if it is represented imperfectly and inadequately in Gambini's nineteenth-century *pastiche*. Kosuth's work ultimately encourages viewers to consider the vast illusion making up the garden and to consider its reality as no more substantial than "the flashing and sparks of drawn swords".

In close proximity to Kosuth's piece is Marta Pan's floating sculpture, which moves freely on the lake surrounding the island. Her work is like a festive exclamation point for the park. Its bright orange colour complements the predominant green foliage reflected in the lake for a large part of the year. Assertively artificial, it seeks to delight rather than confront and to charm rather than provoke. An adjunct to the park, it is a floating diversion which is unconcerned with the rationalist inquiry of minimalist sculpture and the critical stance of Kosuth's conceptual piece.

Unlike Kosuth's sculpture which interrupts the narrative of the Romantic landscape and calls attention to its fictive illusions, the installation by Anne and Patrick Poirier revels in picturesque illusions. Their "Death of Ephialthes" is located in an area that climaxes the Romantic garden. Situated along the course of a series of waterfalls that have been enhanced by Gambini, one approaches the Poiriers' piece along a circuitous route marked by a simulated ruin, quickly followed by a small underground tunnel lined with rocks. After the tunnel the path descends to the spectacular waterfalls and to a bridge that provides a vantage point for viewing them. This Romantic trail serves as the stage for the Poiriers' reconstructed ruin consisting of fragments making up the head of the giant Ephialthes, which rest in a pool near the bridge, and a series of bronze thunderbolts hurled

by Zeus. Referring to the mythological battle between the gods and the giants recounted in Virgil's *Aeneid*, this sculpture underscores the calamitous results to mere earthlings attempting to scale the heights of Mount Olympus. The sculpture poetically evokes human blindness in the form of the arrow that pierces Ephialthes' eye. By including lines of Virgil's poetry as inscriptions on the bronze arrows, the Poiriers dramatize the ways that the sculpture, the landscape, and Virgil all form part of a highly fanciful, mythological text. Their piece is a postmodern *pastiche* that enters into full play with its nineteenth-century backdrop.

Like the Poiriers, Giuseppe Spagnulo invokes mythology for his sculpture at Celle. A minimalist who usually does not work figuratively, Spagnulo was intrigued by the great void formed by the well once used for storing ice at Celle. The area near this void became the site for his "Daphne", which is formed of bronze, olive wood, and corten steel. Instead of creating a frightened nymph similar to Bernini's famous sculpture, Spagnulo invokes a vengeful ogre who embodies the dark foreboding qualities of the Romantic landscape. This wonderfully horrific figure elicits a delightful terror similar to that experienced by the Romantics in the face of an unbridled nature, and it underscores the playfulness of the Gambini garden.

Several sculptures in the central section of the park reinforce strategies already described. The Olavi Lanu piece plays on the natural/artificial dichotomy in a manner analogous to "The Death of Ephialthes". Lanu's sculptures appear at first to be Romantic pieces carved out of real stone and only on close examination reveal their status as contemporary works conceived in recently developed materials. Max Neuhaus has designed a sound installation that also emphasizes the natural/artificial dichotomy of the park. He has placed in four locations taped sounds that are reminiscent and yet different from the noises emanating from such insects as cicadas, locusts and crickets. His acoustical piece interacts with natural sounds, and ultimately goes beyond them by creating a haunting, mechanical simulation of nature that underscores differences as well as similarities between the two. Mauro Staccioli's work takes up a rationalist point of view similar to Karavan's piece, although the effects of weathering, which this artist has chosen to accept, are beginning to make the work picturesque. The large minimal blade cuts through the woods as if to point out the dome formed by the treetops where the sunlight itself breaks up into descending rays, giving this huge block of cement a strange tentativeness. Similarly Sol LeWitt's "Cube Without a Cube" began its life as an element of rationalist thought

placed in a romantic garden, but the effects of weathering are also bringing it into greater contact with nature. The position of LeWitt's incomplete cube is important because it is located next to a path lined with ancient plain trees which are all fragments of their former selves. Over time these trees have lost their inner cores. These openings in the trees serve as natural analogues for LeWitt's sculpture, giving its incompleteness a new meaning and a *pathos* it would not have if it were located elsewhere in the garden.

Deep within the woods and almost hidden away from view is George Trakas' "The Pathway of Love", a work that deconstructs the Romantic metaphor of the garden as an idealized wilderness by bringing it in to play with the industrialized world that Gambini and other Romantics were careful to exclude from their work. It is now becoming apparent to historians that Romanticism is, among other things, a reaction to the excesses of the industrial revolution and a nostalgic retreat into the past. Nature was invoked by the Romantics as the polar opposite of urban sprawl, soot-filled cities, and widespread mechanization. However, instead of allowing Celle to exist as an isolated retreat as it has for almost a century and a half, Trakas reinscribes the industrial within the confines of the natural by paralleling two pathways – one of steel, the other of wood – along a stream that functions as the secret heart of the garden. The paths meet, diverge, meet again, and then abruptly terminate after passing through a bombed-out heart-shaped dam constructed of woven metal rods. Trakas believed that the dam must be dynamited. His explosion of this love affair between nature and technology is a necessary conclusion to his piece because it reenacts the disruption to the environment that has occurred since the Industrial Revolution. In this manner Trakas exposes the artificiality of Gambini's idealized wilderness that was clearly separated from the tensions of the contemporaneous Industrial Revolution.

Reinscribing aspects of the industrial within the natural is important for several other artists working at Celle. Susana Solano modestly offers her schematic building in corten steel which plays on the dialectic between outside and inside spaces as a piece of marginalia, an alternate path that diverges from the main Romantic trail.

More imposing but certainly not pretentious are works by Alice Aycock and Dennis Oppenheim that deal with remnants of the industrialized past. Oppenheim in "Formula Compound (A Combustion Chamber) (An Exorcism)" appears to resurrect aspects of Duchamp's "Great Glass", albeit in three dimensions. He seems to imply that this great lugubrious piece of machinery, which he wished

to use for an evening of fireworks, signals the end of industrialization and mechanization. Resembling a defunct amusement park, Oppenheim's outmoded machine functions in an analogous manner to sculptures that commemorate dead heroes, and, ironically enough, Gambini's garden which veered so far away from the industrial age serves as its graveyard.

Aycock moves further back in time than Oppenheim and joins in "The Nets of Solomon" the wisdom of the ages which she scatters across the landscape as pieces of discontinuous logic. This work makes references to alchemy (Philosopher's Stone), maritime navigation (Astrolabe), physics (the subatomic particles with no charge termed "Neutrino"), and climatic conditions (Atlantic Hurricane and Gulf Stream Ramps). Rather than encouraging viewers to cohere these various models into an overall conception of reality, Aycock appears to be pointing out the incompatibility of traditional systems of knowledge as well as the different forces at work in the universe. This approach is apparent in the dispersal of the sculpture itself, which prevents its being perceived as a single unit. Although Aycock is interested in the beauties of early scientific instruments, which are in themselves works of art, she is careful not to subscribe to any one system of logic. Since the piece presents dislocated bits of bygone rationality, it calls to mind the early nineteenth century Romantics who celebrated the breakup of the Enlightenment's hegemony by creating highly picturesque ruins that alluded to a past golden age of classicism. Similar to Oppenheim's work, Aycock's "Nets of Solomon" functions as a graveyard or museum for past forms of logic. Museums are conceived of as repositories for the past, and this outdoor museum that was originally predicated on establishing the importance of feeling over rationality, oddly enough, becomes the place where out-of-date forms of rationality are nostalgically revered. This retrospective and nostalgic view of rationality is particularly appropriate to Celle since it is close to the birthplaces of Galileo and Leonardo and only a short distance from Florence, where early Renaissance art, which emphasized verifiable views of the world, was created.

In "Cellsmic" Michel Gerard joins aspects of art with science and distills experience into a Platonic universal. Thinking of Leonardo's description of a stone dropping into still water and also considering Duchamp's example of playing with artistic categories, Gerard has created a replication of the still pool at the edge of Gambini's garden by suspending sheets of glass above it. His art thus becomes the inscription of the illusion in the place giving rise to it, as if Mo-

net had created paintings of waterlilies in order to display them in the garden they depict. And his piece serves as a means to deconstruct the illusionary world that this romantic garden represents. Gerard titled the work "Cellsmic", which is a portmanteau word that joins a complex pun on "cells" and "Celle" together with "seismic" referring to earthquakes. His title points to the disruptive yet fecund role that art can play in helping people to understand the way that their concepts alter and transform their surroundings which they naively assumed to constitute reality.

Fausto Melotti's "Theme and Variations II", made of shimmering stainless steel and placed in a shallow reflecting pool in the southwest section of the garden, provides a provocative pendant to both the Oppenheim and Aycock sculptures. While they are concerned with antiquated remnants of rationality in the form of non-functioning machines constructed from their imagination, Melotti, a poet, musician, and trained engineer, extolls the beauties of highly wrought machinery that can be delicate, playful, musical and even human because it is designed by human beings. While Melotti is a Modernist who still believes in progress through technology and in the ability of art to communicate his most subtle thoughts and feelings, Aycock and Oppenheim are postmodernists who apparently still have a high regard for sculpture even if they are not entirely convinced that it is capable of being anything more than a beautiful form giving rise to a chain of slipping signifiers.

At Celle it is only a short distance from the recent past to the prehistoric past. While the works of Aycock, Oppenheim, Solano and Trakas in one way or another refer to aspects of the industrial revolution, works by other site-specific artists allude to other times and places. The Romantic sense of nostalgia pervading the works of the garden is also important for the works of Robert Morris, Beverly Pepper and Fabrizio Corneli, which take on new references and meanings. Morris's "Labyrinth" most assuredly has a basis in his own work, but it also can be seen in terms of the garden and the tradition of Tuscan architecture. Although it is composed of the same parallel bands of green and white stone that decorate both Florence's and Pistoia's Baptistries, Morris's piece serves a different function. While the Baptistry is a centralized structure that celebrates the symbolic immersion of human beings in a spiritual realm, Morris's work is concerned with fragmentation and dislocation. Not only does the interior of "Labyrinth" prevent people from seeing outside its constricting spaces, but it disorients them through slanting internal pathways. A nineteenth-century marble portrait of Cardinal Fabroni, one

of the villa's former owners, looks over "Labyrinth" and lends an element of absurdity to the deliberately confused logic that Morris's maze – his edifice of doubt – represents.

When Morris makes a labyrinth, he assumes a range of traditional meanings. Labyrinths in the form of mazes are delightful enticements. However, as mythological symbols, labyrinths are associated with the creation that Daedalus, the first sculptor, designed for King Minos of Crete. This labyrinth held the fearsome Minotaur, the half-bull and half-man hybrid that became an important symbol for the Surrealists, who wished to explore the labyrinthine pathways of the mind. All these associations inform Morris's piece and cause one to view it as a form loaded with potential meaning. It is characteristic of Morris's work at this time that he diffuses these meanings and makes his "Labyrinth" a piece of architecture that viewers must walk through in order to come to term with its real, yet constricting, space.

Beverly Pepper reworks the concept of the ancient Greek theatre to achieve a new meaning in her "Spazio Teatro Celle". Playing on the origins of the theatre in Bacchanalian revels, which were later formalized into rituals complete with actors and choruses, Pepper creates a stage backdrop of two berms of earth that point to the Dionysian tradition of dismembering the surrogate god and planting him in soil to assure fertile crops. The earth itself is celebrated in terms of the iron oxides of the cast iron panels, which are seen in high relief and are marked by autonomous and often conflicting and chaotic movements that emphasize the nature of the Bacchanalian celebration and the creative event itself. Near the top of the hill Pepper has placed two rusted columns which separate the special sculptural space of the amphitheatre from the rest of the garden. These columns, on axis with the opening between the two berms, are similar to vertical elements occurring in a number of prehistoric sites which mark off the sacred realm from the rest of the world and, at times, provide a focus for the rising sun on the summer solstice. In addition to these columns, Pepper has subtly shaped the earth itself to create a bowl-shaped depression that emphasizes the separate, special space constituting the sculpture. Although the sculpture reenacts aspects of the Greek theatre, it differs markedly from this ancient form in terms of its focus on earth, its use of relief sculpture, and its playful attitudes toward perspective which transforms the reality of the seating area by elongating the space seen from the top of the hill and truncating it from the vantage point of the stage. Although her "amphisculpture" is placed in the center of Gambini's garden and near the Gothic revival tea-house, it appears to antedate both

of them and to point to the early history of the peninsula, when the Greeks were establishing important outposts along its eastern coast and southern region. One might conclude that Pepper's "Spazio Teatro Celle" is a distillation of aspects of the ancient Greek theatre and its mythic past. A confirmed modernist working in the age of post-modernism, Pepper ignores the artificiality of the Gambini garden by making it appear a mere codicil to her work.

Fabrizio Corneli's "Grande estruso" moves further back in time than Pepper's "amphisculpture" to approach the primordial. His large zinc carapace, buried deep within the garden among moss-covered stones and near a shell grotto, resembles a creature from an earlier geological age or a monstrous armadillo. The piece exudes a feeling of nostalgia for a grander, more sublime age. It is a fictive illusion that focuses on the so-called "natural" Romantic illusions surrounding it.

Some artists commissioned to create a piece for Celle have decided to work outside Gambini's garden. While their choice might appear to be determined by the limited available space for sculpture in the park, their completed works suggest a conscious choice. Magdalena Abakanowicz, Bukichi Inoue, Ian Hamilton Finlay and Alan Sonfist have apparently all moved out of the Gambini park because they wanted to create pieces that interact with the Tuscan countryside. Because none of the artists are postmodern, with the exception of Finlay, the questionable reality of the park is not of interest to them. Each artist is modernist to the extent that he or she believes that art is capable of communicating profound convictions about the nature of reality.

According to Ian Hamilton Finlay, his site-specific sculpture "The Virgilian Wood" began as "a confrontation between the ancient park with its Land Art and the new space where vegetation appears in the double role of nature and artistic element". Working in an olive grove, Finlay decided to pay homage to the past. Rather than cutting down olive trees, which is not permitted at Celle, he has interspersed among the vegetation his work, which includes a plow reminiscent of Roman designs, two oval plaques attached to olive trees, and a basket of lemons. Each element, cast in bronze, is inscribed with literary texts that evoke the grand and ancient tradition of honouring nature. Finlay finds this farmland as acculturated as the park: it is highly encoded and carries within it fragments of texts and memories of the past when poets have paid homage to it, as well as mythological overtones that still imbue it with mystery. In "The Virgilian Wood" Finlay implies that a nonacculturated na-

ture no longer exists. It is an impossibility in an advanced and historically conditioned culture such as the late twentieth century.

In "Circles of Time" Alan Sonfist underscores art's regenerative function. He believes his metaphors to be potent regroupings of past elements of the landscape that enable people to view it as an accumulation of ideas and attitudes. The land and its plants are sacred to him, and his "Circles of Time" acts as a natural temple that documents changes occurring in the environment from primordial through ancient times. The inner circle recreates a primordial forest. Surrounding it are bronze castings of branches that, according to the artist, "silently mimic the Greek and Roman gods and heroes of ancient art". Other rings include indigenous thyme as well as laurel, which the Greeks introduced into Italy. Sonfist notes that laurel is an ancient symbol for victory and for poetry and emphasizes its function as a living wreath honoring the poetry of indigenous nature in his art. The outside ring of the piece is formed of stones, and the whole work is framed, according to the artist, by the agricultural cycles of the Fattoria itself. He believes that his "Circles of Time" can be expanded to include the surrounding countryside. "The wheat and olive trees" he has concluded "form the outer circle (which is) harvested every year".

Inoue's "My Sky Hole" is a modern rendition of a traditional Japanese temple with its triumphal gate, magnificent walk towards the temple and entry inside in order to ascend spiritually to higher levels of understanding. People must progress through a dark, underground passageway before advancing to the open vantage point giving them a view of the sky and the surrounding landscape. Located outside the garden, Inoue's piece incorporates some aspects of Gambini's formal vocabulary, such as rocky walls, which remind visitors of grottoes seen in the park. However, unlike Gambini, Inoue does not attempt to convince viewers that his architectural structure is a piece of nature. Instead he emphasizes the ways spaces affect people spiritually and the manner in which certain types of progressions can encourage them to turn inward. His form of transcendence requires an actual as opposed to a simulated landscape in order to impress viewers with the reality and significance of their place in the world.

Magdalena Abakanowicz's "Katarsis" consists of a series of monumental bronze sculptures, representing tree-souls and human-coffins, planted in soil up to their ankles and located in a paddock outside the park and adjacent to a series of ancient olive groves. In describing this piece Abakanowicz points out the human need to establish



harmony. She notes that “from the very beginning man has created myths out of his longing for the lost states of balance, for the pre-historical existence called paradise that was a state without consciousness”. For Abakanowicz, Gambini’s garden represents an attempt at paradise regained, an attitude she regards as inconsistent with a true realization of the human tragedy and the redemptive feelings of purification that are part of cathartic experience. Abakanowicz situates her figures outside the garden, where they represent humanity’s fall from grace. When she places the figures next to olive groves, she calls to mind the symbolic importance of the Mount of Olives in Christian iconography and connects her sculptures to a rich artistic tradition that includes Renaissance and Baroque artists as well as such late nineteenth-century protagonists of alienation as Gauguin and van Gogh. The Christian overtones of the piece may be underscored by the 33 individual sculptures which together could represent the 33 years Christ lived.

In order to create the individual sculptures, Abakanowicz began with large white styrofoam blocks that she hacked into bowed, yet headless, human forms. She made six models for the backs of these figures and repeated each model several times to emphasize the routinized and standardized aspects of modern life. While the backs of the figures represent a prototype, the inside of each sculpture is unique. In this way Abakanowicz dramatizes how external conformity is in conflict with internal and highly individual needs.

Some sculptures at Celle are divided into components that are located in the park and also in the farm buildings or in the villa itself. Although they might appear to establish links between these different spaces, they actually underscore a sense of alienation and dislocation. Both Enrico Castellani’s “Enfiteusi I and II” and Richard Long’s “Grass Circle” and “Ring of Prato’s Green Stone” are involved with loss. Because these works are divided into indoor and outdoor components, they cannot be seen in their entirety at any one time. They demand that viewers recall their pendants, which are located at some distance from them. Seeing these pieces involves memory and a recognition that what is absent is as important as what is present. Looking also incorporates the element of time and the need to move from one piece to its companion. Each work incorporates elements that are lacking in the other; each involves viewers in a process of comparing, matching, relocating and finally comprehending the loss that is involved in seeing these views. Long’s concave circle in Gambini’s garden is reflected in the major farm building by a convex circle formed of local serpentina stone. And Castella-

ni's mirrored elements in the landscape only become comprehensible when one recognizes that they are ghost versions of a fully equipped room inside the farm building.

Originally intended for the villa's terrace, Roberto Barni's blindfolded "Mute Servants" achieve a special poignancy in their location near the back entrance to the Villa, where they reflect, the building's elegant past, when armies of servants worked in the kitchens and tended the gardens. The figures bespeak a loss of tradition as well as a progressive step forward because such people are no longer kept silent and are less prone to be blinded by authority.

Barni's piece, which ensures the past a place in the present, may be considered a leitmotif for much of the sculpture at Celle, which emphasizes the significant role that the past has played in the formation of the present. The art at the Fattoria di Celle assumes an importance far greater than its size or location in the countryside near Pistoia might at first indicate. Giuliano Gori, its impresario, has provided a number of significant contemporary artists with an opportunity to originate site-specific works of art that meditate on the late twentieth century's relationship to the past, to the environment and to the Romantic tradition which transformed nature into an idealized wilderness. Many of these artists have recognized that nature is highly acculturated, at times a simulation and often a shifting signifier that eludes straight-forward definitions. Their works raise questions about the natural/cultural dichotomy, and their art creates an important and also profound sense of doubt as to how we are to approach this culturally conditioned and transformed nature, on which we all depend for survival.