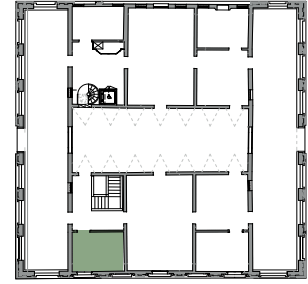


PUTTO ROOM



Putto Room as it appears today

The wall decorations in the *Stanza del putto* (“Putto Room”) feature illusionistic landscapes extending out beyond the painted architectural frame. On two sides, within an unusual corner arrangement, marine horizons and landscapes predominate, complete with ruins, country houses and small figures, while a putto is depicted sitting on a balustrade about to eat a bunch of grapes. The portraying of small painted figures - subordinate to the expansive spaces of the landscapes - and a tendency to break through the surfaces, constitute the typical elements of Roman villas, according to the information provided to us by the ancient authors. In the decorative schemes used throughout the villa, the rural views take precedence, in line with the thinking of Alvise Cornaro on the benefits of the country life, but in this room in particular the landscapes of Sustris enter into a dialogue with what can be seen looking out over the hillsides, as if the intention were to fuse the real and painted landscapes.



DID YOU KNOW

The putto resting against the painted faux column serves as a repoussoir (“contrast”): the figure is presented in the foreground, and thus functions as a way to push back the perception of the main subject, increasing the sense of depth. The large grape that the putto is about to eat is a “garganega”, a table-wine variety that is typical of the Euganean Hills. The effect created by the voluminous figures of Apollo and Daphne on the opposite wall is very different, since they appear to “enter” into the internal space of the room.



Vitruvio, *De architectura*, Venice, 1567



Veronese, Frescoes in Villa Barbaro at Maser

The Villa dei Vescovi was built in the first half of the 16th century with the precise intention of bringing back to life the Roman *domus* (house). In this sense, the villa is the oldest extant example of that obsession with the ancient world that was very much a feature of the villas constructed in the Veneto region throughout the 16th century. Sustris's fresco decoration, for its part, is the first example of the cult of classicism that would be developed 20 years later with the frescoes of Paolo Veronese (1528-1588) in Palladio's Villa Barbaro at Maser (Treviso).

As you look towards the loggia, the wall features a mythological chase sequence set in a forest: this is likely to be the myth of Apollo and Daphne, where the god chases the nymph as she turns round, trying to avoid being touched, until she is saved by her father and turned into a laurel tree. The image does not comply entirely with the iconographic tradition, since the motif of metamorphosis is absent; however, the foliage framing the scene, albeit fragmented, would appear to be laurel.



Sustris, *Apollo and Daphne*, Putto Room



Sustris, detail of the Putto Room



Sustris, detail of the Putto Room



Michelangelo, *Il Giorno* ("Day"), Florence, San Lorenzo, Medici Chapels

The landscape apertures in this room highlight Sustris's skill in assimilating the Raphaelesque evocations and fitting them in to a Venetian palette. Alongside the landscapes, there is also a monochrome male figure in a position that is reminiscent of Michelangelo's *Giorno* ("Day"), one of the statues he made for the Medici Chapels in Florence. The painted architrave returns to the same motifs as the villa's external cornice - a choice that reveals the unity of concept between the architecture and the frescoes.