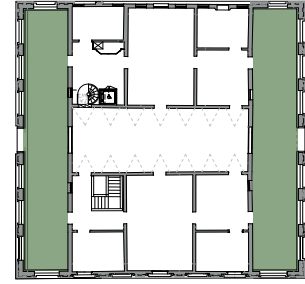


LOGGIAS



The western Loggia

The Villa dei Vescovi, referred to as a *palazzo da prencipe* (“prince’s palace”) in a 1542 letter written by the client, Francesco Pisani, is sited in a wonderful location, atop a slope that overlooks the valley between Mount Solone and Mount Lonzina, surrounded by the circle of Mount Pendice, Mount Pirio and Mount Rina, and opening up towards the plain of Torreglia and Montegrotto. Built as a holiday home and the hub for a cultural circle, the villa engages strongly with the natural world - something that, back in those days, was considered essential in providing food for thought. The fresco decoration of the loggias on the east and west sides is quite extraordinary, albeit now partially ravaged by time and by the opening of doors and windows along the internal walls. These spaces - the function of which was to connect the villa to the surrounding countryside - must have had a special significance for Francesco Pisani, given that in the aforementioned letter of 1542 he asked for advice from the painter and architect Giulio Romano on “a number of loggias”.



DID YOU KNOW

With the Villa dei Vescovi, the idea of a new type of country residence - which first arose in Petrarch’s Veneto in the 14th century before migrating initially to Tuscany and then to Rome - returned to where it had begun, on the Euganean Hills. For the country *domus*, of particular importance was the view of the surrounding natural environment, and in this regard the villa commissioned by Francesco Pisani, which seems like a “machine” constructed specifically to admire the countryside, is exceptionally successful, thanks at least in part to the two continuous loggias that serve as belvederes on the eastern and western sides.



The Villa dei Vescovi immersed in the Euganean Hills



The Villa dei Vescovi in the 1960s

Alvise Cornaro, in his *De la vita sobria* (“Writings on the Sober Life”), published in Venice in 1558, lauds a new model of country living - one that is healthy and solitary, to be carried out in residences immersed in the natural world. What comes across clearly is the almost purificatory role played by the countryside, which for Cornaro helps mankind to think lofty thoughts and to behave in a civilised and ethical fashion. As the Villa dei Vescovi shows, country houses such as these, which engage with their natural surroundings, are ideal for gatherings with a humanist focus.

With the Villa dei Vescovi, the humanist Alvise Cornaro and the architect Giovanni Maria Falconetto created what was a revolutionary building: on the *piano nobile*, three of the four sides are opened up by a series of arches, which turn the villa into a *bona fide* belvedere from which to observe the landscape, framed like a painting come to life. Moreover, the loggias feature an illusionistic solution on their inner walls: the arches of the real architecture are doubled up in the frescoes, where beyond the balustrades, immersive landscapes of rock and water appear, in dialogue with the actual landscape.



Eastern loggia, internal wall



Western loggia, internal wall



Eastern loggia, internal wall



Western loggia, external wall

Walking along the eastern loggia, you feel as though you are in the covered passageways (*ambulationes*) of ancient Roman villas, as described by Vitruvius: a thick pergola is painted on all sides, featuring cane shoots and vines, with putti involved in a range of activities (playing, firing arrows, holding aloft festoons, making music, etc.). In the western loggia, in contrast, Lambert Sustris came up with a wooden trellis with oculi, from which face out two putti at play, while the lower register features painted faux statues, today partially recovered by the restoration.