



BOOKS ON ARCHITECTURE

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Author(s) Mollet, André
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French

In 1651, Henrik Keyser, bookseller and printer who owned the most renowned publishinghouse in Sweden, printed André Mollet's treatise in three simultaneous editions in Stockholm, in French (*Le jardin de plaisir*), in a German translation by Gregorius Geijer (*Der Lust Gartten*) and in Swedish (*Lustgård*), whose translator is unknown. Relatively few copies have been preserved; some, very rare, have the three versions of the text, from which the buyers could choose which book to buy. The book is dedicated to Queen Christina of Sweden, who granted a privilege dated March 12, 1651. Editing and working out the illustrations took six months according to the foreword, which places the composition of the whole in 1650.

The author, whose birth date is unknown, but who must have been born around 1600, came from a dynasty of French gardeners. His grandfather Jacques Mollet had worked for Charles de Lorraine, duc d'Aumale, at Anet; his father Claude I Mollet had been summoned to serve Henri IV, becoming first gardener to the king and having the responsibility for the new garden of the Tuileries, the allée des Mûriers and the little garden at the Louvre, as well as Saint-Germain-en-Laye, Montceaux-en-Brie and Fontainebleau. André pays homage to him in the

headword and publishes his portrait engraved by Michel Lasne. The illustration aims to assert the professional status acquired by gardeners, in a corporation since 1600. In it Claude I Mollet is indicating a plan, placed on the table next to a compass. The small edifice which frames this oval portrait is flanked at the top by two *putti* carrying at the left a square and a compass, at the right a pair of scissors and a line. Thus it is the architectural dimension of the garden, as a space drawn in its plan as in its volume, which is pointed up. The two figures in the base, related to a river-god and a nymph, are nonetheless leaning on fruits and vegetables and are holding respectively a spade and a rake, recalling the connections between gardening and agriculture. The terrestrial globe and the hourglass placed at the foot of the portrait refer to the necessary knowledge of the terrestrial world, of time which passes and of the weather. Such iconography suggests that this engraving was initially conceived to illustrate the work of Claude I Mollet himself, the *Théâtre des plans et jardinages*, which, written between 1620 and 1636, would only be published posthumously in 1652, and in which the popularization of astrology and meteorology occupies quite a place. *Le jardin de plaisir* hardly approaches these areas.

Young André had certainly contributed to the illustrations of the *Théâtre des plans et jardinages* with three of his brothers, Claude II, Jacques and Noël. Towards 1629, he was summoned to England by Queen Henriette-Marie, the daughter of Henri IV and Marie de Médicis, then worked starting in 1633 in Holland with the architect Simon de la Vallée and the superintendent of fountains Joseph Dinant, for Frederick Henry of Nassau, prince of Orange. In France in 1635, he returned to England, working for Henriette-Marie at Wimbledon Manor in 1641-1642, then went back to France because of the English civil war. It was in 1648 that he went to Sweden on the invitation of Queen Christina, according to an agreement with her lover Magnus Gabriel de la Gardie, concluded during his mission to France in 1646. Mollet's son Jean accompanied him, and he conveyed rare plants (orange trees, lemon trees, pomegranate trees, bulbs, etc.) for a total value of two thousand pounds. As soon as he arrived in Stockholm, André Mollet worked notably in the royal garden or Kungsträdgården, near the Saint James church, and renovated the old gardens of the Houblonnière (Humlegården). The dedication to Queen Christina of Sweden alludes to his training in France, his career in England and Holland and to his present functions close to the crown. By publishing *Le jardin de plaisir*, Mollet proposed an ideal royal garden project, which is the subject of the last chapter, but was never to be realized. During those years, Mollet also worked for Swedish nobles, whether it was for Magnus Gabriel de la Gardie in Jakobsdal, north of the capital, or for the governor general Schering Rosenhane on the island of Kungsholmen in Stockholm, as a garden designer and plant supplier. He left Sweden at the end of the summer, 1653, a few months before the Queen abdicated. Starting in 1658 he would work again in England; in 1661 Charles II named André and his nephew Gabriel (the son of Claude II Mollet) gardeners for the new plantings in Saint James Park. André Mollet died in London on June 7, 1665, probably of the plague, whereas his son Jean pursued his activity in Sweden.

The treatise takes its title from an expression already present in *Le théâtre d'agriculture et mesnage des champs* (1600) by Olivier de Serres. Here it referred in particular to royal houses. The notion of “jardin de plaisir” had essentially been put into theory by Jacques Boyceau de la Barauderie in his *Traité du jardinage selon les raisons de la nature et de l'art* (posthumous publication in 1638), in which he went beyond the distinction established by his predecessor among four types of gardens : vegetable, flower, medicinal and fruit orchards, inappropriate according to him for the “princes, seigneurs et gentilshommes de moyens”, to prescribe a garden in two parts, one “pour le plaisir et beauté”, the other “utile”. This separation wasn't totally strict, since Boyceau foresaw some plants “medicinales, ou servans aux salades” in the parterres of the pleasure garden, and recommended on the other hand that the useful garden not be “sans embellissemens d'artifices” including arbors or placing beds or borders in shapes and colors. Nevertheless, the theoretical separation laid out by Boyceau would result in the notion of “jardin de plaisance ou de propreté” in *La théorie et la pratique du jardinage* (1709) by Antoine-Joseph Dezallier d'Argenville, in which neither vegetable gardens nor orchards are treated.

Meanwhile it is necessary to understand clearly that in André Mollet's book, published thirteen years after Boyceau's, this break was far from complete. In fact, the first ten of the eleven chapters constitute a “abbregé de l'agriculture” as announced in the title. In it Mollet condenses very efficiently the knowledge that traditionally was the subject of rural economic manuals, a category in which Olivier de Serres' treatise belongs, and in a large measure, so does his own father's. In relation to these two models, encyclopaedic prolixity gives way to concision, as the foreword makes explicit: “Je prie le lecteur d'excuser ma brieveté, le renvoyant a plusieuzs bons autheurs qui ont cy devant amplement traicté de l'agriculture”. André Mollet also takes care to note certain particular observations on growing plants in the northern climate. Thus he addresses successively the soil and its improvements (chapter I), the nursery (II), fruit trees (III), grafts (IV), grapevines (V), the vegetable garden or “jardin de cuisine” (VI-VII). The “jardin à fleurs” (VIII) is subdivided in two parts, one for the shrubs and large herbaceous plants, the other for low plants. He covers “arbres sauvages” (IX), distinguished by their deciduous foliage (oak, chestnut, lime-tree...) or evergreens (fir, holly, boxwood, cypress...), and “orangers et autres arbres rares” (X), recommending that a summer orangery be built in the northern climate. The last chapter is devoted to spatial composition (“Des ornements du jardin de plaisir”), which is essentially made up of an explanation of the thirty plates, drawn by André Mollet himself. This is certified by his foreword and the presence of his monogram (“AM. I. f.” for *André Mollet Invenit et fecit*), for which he collaborated with the engravers Jan van de Velde (born in Utrecht and died in Haarlem in 1686) and Wolfgang Hartmann (probably born in Gdansk and died in Stockholm in 1663). Each plate has a scale in toises (six-foot measurements) as was the case in Boyceau, but not in de Serres, so that it would be easier “de reduire sur terre tous nos desseins en leur proportion requisite” (sign. Fr), and is specifically annotated in the text. Mollet considers the exterior treatment of a “maison royalle” (sign. E4v), implicitly

addressing Queen Christina of Sweden.

The beginning of the chapter insists on a good distribution of space in the pleasure garden: “nous y ordonnerons les parterres, bosquets, arbres, palissades, et alleës diverses, comme aussi les fontaines, grottes, statuës, perspectives, et autres tels ornemens, sans lesquels le dict jardin de plaisir ne peut estre parfait ; neantmoins il est evident que toutes ces choses confuses, et mal appropriées ne font pas un trop bel effect, c’est pourquoy nous essayerons a les disposer chacunes en leur lieu, suivans l’ordre que l’experience nous a appris, dont les desseins suivans peuvent donner intelligence » (sign. E4v). This formula clearly expresses a conception, already present during the second half of the 16th century (for example in the work of Vasari), which assimilates the work of the “dessinateur de jardin” into the rhetorical operation of *dispositio* of the required “ornaments”, in other words the spatial arrangement of topical elements which fall within the province of the *inventio*. On this second level, Mollet’s treatise shows itself to be less loquacious and systematical than Boyceau’s, whose third book (“De la disposition et ordonnance des jardins, et des choses qui servent à leur embellissement”) listed many of these ornaments- grottoes, canals or even aviaries – in as many specific chapters. On the other hand, Mollet appears more specific when it concerns disposition of space.

In the first place, in giving advice – as Vincenzo Scamozzi had done before him in *L’idea dell’architettura universale* (1615) and Louis Savot in *L’architecture françoise des bastimens particuliers* (1624) – to plant “une grande avenuë a double, ou triple rang (...) tiree d’allignement perpendiculaire a la face du devant de la maison, au commencement de laquelle soit fait un grand demy cercle, ou quarré” (sign. E4v), his text accounts for the principle of axial organization which had widely asserted itself in French practice during the 16th century.

Above all, Mollet supports his discourse with images. Plates 1 and 2 constitute in fact the first general garden plans published in a treatise. The first one, the largest (310 by 220 toises, i.e. approximately 604 by 429 meters), has often been compared to the Jardin des Tuileries because of its modular disposition terminating in a half-moon shape. Recent research has also shown analogies with Ter Nieuburch at Rijswijk, the garden of Frederick Henry of Nassau, which was designed on the model of the Luxembourg and in which Mollet very probably collaborated, at the beginning of the 1630s, with the gardener Louis D’Anthoni. Similar dimensions and the same placing of an exterior canal surrounding the garden on three sides are found there. The second ideal plan, smaller (200 by 150 toises, i.e. 390 by 293 meters) is very similar to Honselaarsdijk near The Hague, where Mollet had worked for the stathouder from 1633 to 1635, and from which he took the access avenue terminating in a half-moon, which had been completed before he worked there. Nevertheless one will notice that the ideal plan is differentiated from Honselaarsdijk with the absidial termination of the axis, a very common solution in French gardens between 1620 and 1640 (from the palaces of the Luxembourg and Cardinal in Paris to the châteaux of Richelieu, Berny, Fromont or Balleroy), and which was already visible at the end of the 16th century, whether at Charleval, at Maulnes or even in the famous “echo” of the Tuileries. Thus transposing both

French and Dutch realities, these two plans illustrate the axial composition of the garden, linked to the château in a general conception, and cut up by a regular grill of “cases” to fill in as one wished, with the help of models of parterres, thickets and labyrinths which are given later (level of the *inventio*). It must be noted that the junction of the small general plan, in which the allées must be planted with verdant palisades, separated not by thickets, but different sectors where “l’on peut planter des arbres fruitiers, ou bien en faire potager, dont les dites pallissades hautes pourront empescher la deformité: car autrement nous n’approuvons pas que le jardin de plaisir soit interrompu d’herbages, ny d’arbres fruitiers, a moins qu’ils ne soient plantez en expailler; mais bien d’en faire un jardin a part” (sign. F2r).” This indication echoes Boyceau’s instructions on the separation between the pleasure garden and the useful garden, which Mollet tends to recommend here without applying it strictly.

Among the models provided, the boxwood parterres with embroidery – like scrolls – the type whose development Claude I Mollet develops in his treatise – are represented first (pl. 3 and 5-18). Thus model 3, with the square parterre cut in diagonals by four allées, can be placed at the bottom of the large general plan; plate 4, placed here symmetrically, gives a variation in a “compartiment de gazon”. Likewise, model 5, with a format terminating in a half-moon, can be adapted to go in front of the château in the small general plan. Mollet points out that plate 6 corresponds to the parterre he executed at Kungsträdgården, an indication confirmed by a drawing at the Royal Library in Stockholm. The text alludes to the process of transferring the design on the ground by using a modular grid.

Plates 19 to 24 show what Mollet calls “compartimens de gazon” ; parterres composed of different geometric pieces, each one made up of a flower border surrounding a central space planted with grass, which it “faut faucher pour le moins toutes les sepmaines” (sign. F³v) and roll as in England. These pieces are separated from each other by narrow paths in the middle of which runs a continuous “filet” of lawn, widening at the places set aside for statues. This category, never seen before, could be considered a stage towards the “parterres à l’anglaise”, composed of large stretches of lawn. Dezallier d’Argenville evokes their success at the beginning of the 18th century. Among the models provided by Mollet, one must point out that plate 23 corresponds exactly to the parterre executed by him at Honselaarsdijk on the western side of the château, information confirmed moreover in the English edition of the *Jardin du plaisir* (1670), such as an engraving by Balthazar Florisz van Berckerode (c. 1638) represents it, except that the lion rampant of the house of Nassau does not figure in the center. Vanessa Bezemer Sellers (2001) has shown that the parterre with embroidery-like scrolls planted symmetrically on the eastern side of Honselaarsdijk had likewise been published in plate 14.

Plates 25 to 28 illustrate groves, embellished by garden arbors and cabinets. Plates 29 and 30 finally represent “dedalles, ou labyrinthes”, for which Mollet recommends planting verdant palisades “a double rang, afin de les rendre plus fortes, et espaissees” (sign. F4v). The treatise closes with advice on spreading sand

on allées and parterres.

Five years after André Mollet's death an English version of this treatise was published (*The Garden of Pleasure*, London, John Martyn, 1670), with a dedication from the author to Charles II and a poem to André Mollet by a certain Belon. Few copies of it have been preserved. The text, considerably abridged, is mainly based on chapter XI, greatly rearranged with omissions and additions, and again is essentially a commentary on the illustrations. This time there are thirty-six plates. In fact this edition includes the plan for Saint James Park, developed by André Mollet and his nephew Gabriel starting in 1661, where they planted many dwarf fruit trees and flowers imported from Charles Mollet (another of Claude II's sons) who was in Paris. In addition, five new designs of grassy parterres are reproduced. A major document on the close international relations which developed in the area of the art of gardening in Europe between 1625 and 1650, André Mollet's book was not reedited until 1981, when Isabelle Billiard, Éditions du Moniteur (Paris), adapted it in contemporary French with a postface by Michel Conan. In 2006 the editor Gyllene Snittet (Uppsala) put out a facsimile reprint of the three 1651 editions- French, Swedish and German; a second volume, including the 1670 English version and a series of annotations by Swedish researchers (Anna Jakobson, Göran Lindhal, Kjell Lundquist and Åke Nisbeth), was published in 2007.

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Le jardin de plaisir, the diagnosis of the mineral therefore reflects an equally probable pitch.

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