Ninfa: von der lost city zum Sehnsuchtsort. Perspektiven eines interdisziplinären Forschungsprojektes

Michael Matheus, i. R. Ehrenvorsitzender des Instituts für Geschichtliche Landeskunde Rheinland-Pfalz e.V. (IGL)

Based on descriptions such as "The Most Romantic Garden in The World" and "It doesn't get more romantic than this", the lecture will discuss the question of what makes Ninfa so unique compared to other green paradises in the world. The lecture will argue that it is above all the more than two thousand years of history inscribed in the garden complex that makes the site so special. The garden history documented since the 16th century, with its sequence and juxtaposition of up to seven manifestations of real or perceived horticultural art, cannot be assigned to any of the time-specific forms of garden art developed in Europe. The coexistence of plants and ruins can be seen as a specific feature of the site, for which the term "ruin garden" could be appropriate - something that needs to be discussed. The ruins are originals and not copies or quotations as in many landscape gardens. Both ruins and plants deserve the highest level of appreciation, conservation and care.

Metaphors used for Ninfa, such as those of the city of the dead and the swamp city, are reminiscent of the malaria that was rampant there and in the surrounding swamps for centuries and successfully combated in Europe, but also of the fact that thousands of people worldwide, including many children, still fall victim to this disease every year. The succession of earthly paradises realised in Ninfa nevertheless points to the possibilities of human endeavour and imagination and at the same time to the vulnerability and mutability of his creations. The history of the place and its gardens encourages us in a special way to preserve and carefully develop these total works of art developed by nature and human creativity.