

The Venetian Villa is a type of building designed by the aristocracy of the Republic of Venice, which spread out in the rural areas of the *Domini di Terraferma* (Mainland Dominion) from the late fifteenth century to the early nineteenth century. It's the paradigm of a universal civilization very different from the other types of Italian villas, not only for its artistic or architectural elements, but also because it's a sort of representation of a regional identity, culture, art, history, landscape and environment, absolutely unique and unrepeatable.

The most common archetype is the Farm-Villa, made up of a main building (*Casa Dominicale* or *Palazzo*), a particular architectonic structure enriched by precious finishings and decorations. It is the abode of the noble owner, in which you must mark off the distance from the simple forms of the farmer's house. Depending on the various provinces of the Venetian domain, the architectural composition of the villa takes on different typological characteristics while maintaining unchanged the elements that compose it. In addition to the noble abode, there may be one or two *Barchesse*: long barns with an open side porch facing the interior courtyard, and stables for animals in the closed side, on the ground floor. The outbuildings were meant as houses for the peasants in the owner's family service, while the warehouses were designed to accommodate the tools employed for the various activities in the farm. There might be one or two *Torri Colombari* (Dove Towers), sometimes derived from the processing of old fortified towers with square base. They were used for the breeding of pigeons or doves and hosted rooms assigned to the farm service. Finally the *Brolo* (orchard), which was generally behind the main facade of the villa. It was an intermediate space between the villa and the cultivated fields and it was meant to grow fruit trees and vegetables. The complex of these buildings was usually surrounded by a boundary wall, interrupted by two entrances. The main one was opened onto the road (often a river) connecting the city to the country; the side entrance was the link between the villa and the agricultural fund.

The Venetian Villa combines the practical function of land management with leisure and recreation; by doing this the Venetian and the local nobility create spaces for recreation and recovery. The contribution to the Venetian villa by the architect Andrea Palladio (1508-1580) is of fundamental importance and he greatly influenced, in later centuries, the architectural type. Palladio took the ancient Roman buildings as his model, particularly the sacred ones, and adapted the impressive architectural forms to the functional type of the traditional Venetian villa. From the second half of the sixteenth century on, this architectonic type is called *Architettura Templare* (Templar Architecture). In the seventeenth century the Venetian villas were transformed by the desire to own grandiose and spectacular buildings after the model of the royal palace of Versailles in France. The garden took the place of the agricultural surroundings and there was a change in the disposition of the villa complex. The rural character took a minor value leaving space to pomp and luxury. The new element introduced in the seventeenth century villa is the *Oratorio* (oratory), accessible to all the faithful people who worked in the property. In the eighteenth century with the spread of the practice of the resort, around the major princely residences a lot of stately houses were built, which reproduced the model of the Venetian house. The bourgeois-villa, in which the owners used to spend periods of leisure and vacation, is adorned with frescoes and

decorations inspired by games, minuets and country walks, winking portrayals of a humanity that was oblivious to the storm that, in 1797 with Napoleon's invasion and the subsequent fall of the Republic, would have wiped out an unrepeatabe world.