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The Ruler of the Waters: The role of Neptune in the episcopal representational strategy of Markus Sittikus in Hellbrunn

Archbishop Markus Sittikus of Hohenems had his leisure palace of Hellbrunn built some 6 kilometers from Salzburg within the space of two years (1613-1615)¹. Despite a lack of building plans or reports, the period of construction can be dated on the basis of invoices and an inscription in the garden. Current research suggests it was designed by the court architect Santino Solari (1576-1646), from Verna at Lake Como. The precise connections and reasons for selecting this man are by and large unknown. His qualification was probably due to the solid reputation enjoyed in Italy by the Comasques, whose name derives from their place of origin (Rüdiger 2010, 547)².

The ensemble, consisting of *villa suburbana* and gardens, has remained in its original condition for the most part to this day. The grounds, divided originally into three separate gardens spaces, comprised a cloister in the southeast – now extinct – with inhabited hermitages; animal enclosures and hunting grounds on Hellbrunn Hill and the western meadows; while the actual leisure gardens were located between the hill and the palace, with water games, labyrinths, grottos and automata. The two life-sized ruler's portraits of Markus Sittikus by the Florentine Servite monk Fra Arsenio Mascagni (ca. 1570-1632), showing the prince-archbishop in front of paintings of his most important building activities, the new construction of the cathedral and Hellbrunn (**fig. 1**), as well as a large copperplate from 1619, which show engravings by Mathäus Merian from his "Topographia Bavariae" around 1644, and by Franz Anton Danreiter from his

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2 On the court architect Santino Solari: Rüdiger 2010 and Wallentin 1994.



1 Detail of Dom Arsenio Mascagni, *Portrait of Archbishop Markus Sittikus of Hohenems*, 1618. Oil on canvas, 235 x 143cm, Salzburg, Hellbrunn. Palace administration of Hellbrunn. Photo credit: Franz Dittelbacher.

“Salzburger Prospekt” in 1727, testify to this state. In particular they stage the garden area of Hellbrunn as an outstanding monument of princely representational culture of the early 17th century. This contemporary appreciation runs counter to the contradictory assessment in the research, which characterises Hellbrunn as the most significant preserved northern Alpine garden of its age, on an equal standing with Italy’s villa complexes, a “Pratolino del Nord” (Rava 1970, 27) and its assessment as a plumper imitation of the exemplary grounds in the south. The claim was that it was precisely the gardens’ lack of importance at the cultural periphery – the absence of conversions or destruction – that secured its continued existence (Schaber 2004, 8-9). Every new examination of the gardens starts with substantial clarification, from previous research, of the circumstances of its creation and an examination of the individual parts of the garden³. However, up to date, there has been no new analysis that argues in a broader cultural context just how ambitious these gardens were conceived, in dialogue with other gardens that were created around the same time. Above all, it may be possible to demonstrate a narrative – previously disputed in the field of research – of the staging of the garden. The following considerations aim to present initial aspects of a more comprehensive study for discussion.

3 Selected literature on the Hellbrunn ensemble: Hajós 2010, where the author addresses the water games at Hellbrunn and sets them in dialogue with the same sources as in this paper, however with a different point of interest; furthermore, Kamp and Kühberger 2016 and Bigler 1996.

The gardens of Markus Sittikus are particularly suited to provide information about the role of water and that of the water god Neptune in representational strategies and their realization in garden art. They are especially suitable – as the remarks below shall demonstrate – for an exemplary analysis.

The outstanding state of preservation of the historical grounds certainly plays an important role. Above all, however, a conspicuously dense staging of water and Neptune can be observed in a princely leisure garden that – although the associated residential city lay directly at a river, the Salzach – had no existential dependency on the element of water. The ecclesiastical principality of Salzburg did not lie at the sea, but rather at a safe distance, in the middle of the continent; the elementary power of the sea presented neither a threat nor a challenge. The prince-bishopric was not a military marine power, it did not depend economically on ocean trade, nor was it possible for the elected regent to inherit and embellish a mythological family narrative and develop it further as legitimisation of his rule for subsequent generations. Nevertheless, from the multitude of gods and mythological figures, the archbishop chose the gods of the deep for his leisure grounds, who arose from legions of tritons and naiads. To date it has escaped researchers just how much this choice reveals about the self-image of Markus Sittikus.

Specifically, Sittikus conceived three recognisably different types and ideas of sea gods in one narrow space. Beyond the realm of mere sculptural garden decoration, the prince developed a programme that he connected with the ‘genius loci’ of the place and which he invigorated with the help of elementary powers. Sittikus also expressed this achievement by using a stone inscription in the garden:

Quos hic amoenos colles / herbosa prata nitidas uides aquas, / Marcus Sitticus / Archip[iscop]us Salisb[urgensis] [et] Princeps / neglecta naturae dona / non absque commiseratione admirans / moenibus cinxit theatris ornauit / é paludoso limo / tot uarios fontes collegit / dilecta posteritati dicauit / MDCXIII. (Inscription on the large exedra in Hellbrunn, 1613)⁴

The prince embedded the inscription plate on the central axis of the palace in the large exedra, which together with the palace façade encompassed the central garden square. Cast in stone, it demonstrated (and continues to do so today) its hydrotechnical power. It was what made the creation of the leisure grounds possible in the first place. Instead of converting the country homes of his predecessors and subjecting himself to convention, he reclaimed land from the Salzburg moorland around Hellbrunn Hill – an island elevation. He then succeeded – according to his own self-assured claim – in cultivating this no-man’s-land into his personal place of leisure. Using hydrotechnical means, the prince-archbishop tamed a wilderness that was deemed to be infectious, due

4 “This lovely hill, here, / this grassy meadow, the clear water that you see, / Markus Sittikus, Archbishop and Prince of Salzburg / has surrounded with walls the neglected gifts of nature, / admiring them not without pity, / has decorated them with theatres, / collected many different sources / on the boggy threshold / and dedicated them to dear posterity / MDCXIII” (Translation by the author).

to its moistness and its insects, and surrounded this space with walls, subjecting the wilderness to his unrestricted authority (Zangheri 1993, 55)⁵. As a prince he recognised the “neglected gifts of nature”, and ascribed them a new order. Such an “aesthetic taming” (Lefevré 1977, 523) of nature is symptomatic of the garden design of the time, but Sittikus opted for the greatest possible challenge with his choice of location for his *villa suburbana*. “É paludoso limo / tot uarios fontes collegit” did not appear to present an obstacle, but rather an added motivation for the choice of this site – or at least a special topos of speaking about this choice.

With the “lovely hill” and the “grassy meadow”, as well as the “sources”, the “clear water” and the “neglected gifts of nature”, the inscription invoked topos with which Markus Sittikus followed a discursive field that stretched back to antiquity. Furthermore, the text also invoked the – equally topical – taming of elementary powers. Another theme that was topical since antiquity was garden design and the technical design of water games. Even in itself, water could be encountered in many different forms: Water can flow, gush, bubble, fall, shoot up, drop, evaporate, ripple, sink, and freeze. It can be hard and soft. It can carry things, and one can sink in it. Due to its immeasurable variety – “varietas” – it became the most exciting building element in creating one’s own Arcadia of – as Sittikus invoked – “lovely hills” and “grassy meadows”, in which “sources” bubbled. For his arcadia, Sittikus used the high spring level, and the resulting numerous springs that pour from the crumbling gravel terrace above Hellbrunn over the resulting edge (Seefeldner 1961, 8-9.) and which previously made the land boggy and unusable, as a reservoir and natural propulsion for his waterworks. He thus transformed the geographical disadvantage into an advantage, since there was no need to draw water by means of channels, as in other gardens. Instead, he literally allowed the well-contoured ‘genius loci’ to flow directly as a natural force into his spatial work of art. While other ensembles, for example the Villa d’Este in Tivoli, had to use up the entire hydropower of the diverted Aniene to operate its fountains and water games, springs arose at various sites in Hellbrunn as an inexhaustible power. Sittikus is likely to have thought this superior to the more famous gardens and parks. In Hellbrunn he presented his guests with a kind of nature that was formed as “natura altra” and which provided – as Gisberti put it around 1670 – “a leisure for the soul without beginning or end” (Schaber and Schrattenecker 1997, 18). A significant part of this leisure also no doubt derived from the knowledge of being in agreement with authors like Cicero, who spoke of: “by our hands, eventually, we almost attempt to create another nature within the natural world”. (Cicero 1989, II, 152).

5 Here and elsewhere I do not assume that Markus Sittikus himself carried out any work or drafted any designs. Alongside Solari the Servite monk Fra Giachino is listed in the invoices as master fountain builder. However it is unclear whether he was also responsible for the development of the garden ensemble, nor is anything more known about this person. For reasons of linguistic simplicity, I conflate architects, artists and craftsmen in the master builder as the decisive entity.

As the picture in Mascagni portrait is presenting, the prince-archbishop had collected the spring water in the eastern water parterre where, motionless in its artificial pool surroundings, it was intended to extend the Hellbrunn “*natura altera*” by its own-mirrored image. Mascagni presents the water parterre at the level of Markus Sitticus’ shoulders. By means of an underground overflow, to this day the pond still feeds the straight canal that runs along the palace, before exiting the gardens in the west and entering the Hellbrunn Stream. A single path ran along the canal, known as the Prince’s Way, which leads through the gardens. To analyse the representational strategy, however, it does not suffice – and this is the methodical thesis presented here – to analyse the design of the gardens alone. Rather, in order to work out the levels of meaning, it should be taken into account that historical observers did not move through the gardens like visitors to a cultural attraction. Instead, they came at the invitation of the lord. Even more: The prince is likely to have accompanied them through his park. He was an indispensable protagonist of the historical reception situation. The prince thus moved – we can assume – with the flow of the tamed waterpower, together with his guests through the gardens, without presenting them with any destination. The angled path system and the surrounding hedges block the views of any end point. Visiting parties had no other access points, deviations or exits. Such a prevention of decision-making options and the enforced following of the water’s course makes Sittikus’ concept of the series of grottos, sculptures and water tricks a matter of specialist interest. In contrast to other gardens, it was not possible to discover the attractions by chance while strolling in the park or to seek them out deliberately. Rather, in Hellbrunn they had to be experienced in their intended interrelation. That is also reflected in the precise illustration in Mascagni’s portraits and in the aforementioned engravings. It was also the prince who activated the attractions and the water games. Part of the point of the water tricks was to aim for a surprise and not reveal their nature prematurely. They required a targeted deployment in an eloquent setting. Without the prince, the garden could not come to life. This garden space, through which the prince had water flow as the overarching, common theme, can be seen as the heart of the ensemble. In this sequence, the prince-bishop installed three different sculptures of water gods. They framed the space and structured the Prince’s Way according to different aspects of water shaping. The structure of the examination is less influenced by systematical criteria but it is conducted accordingly to the order in the garden, the flow of the water imitating the performative experience of the garden space.

Markus Sittikus opened his Prince’s Way with a Neptune in a ‘natural’ grotto, consisting of two water basins (**fig. 2**). The bearded god rode on a dolphin in the upper basin, holding his metal trident in his right hand. His left foot stood on the animal’s muzzle, while his right foot was wrapped in a cloth that fell in folds from his left thigh across his lap and over his dolphin’s side. Like all the sculptures in the garden, the Neptune sculpture was made from marble from Untersberg, a quarry that loomed towards the sky, easily visible from Hellbrunn. Untersberg marble is a limestone, which however could be



2 Salzburg, Hellbrunn (1613-1615), Neptune-grotto at the beginning of the alley of the Elector. Photo credit: author.

worked and polished like marble. In this manner, Sittikus made use of materials from the immediate vicinity and created his “*natura altera*” from the nature of his very own principality. The basin was framed and separated from the surrounding nature by an exedra made from coarsely hewn conglomerate rock.

Sittikus had the dolphin spew water into a large clam, which then spilled over the edge of the shell into the basin. Thus the group of figures appeared to produce from within the water in which it sat, until the basin overflowed. The centre of the basin’s edge is interrupted by another low conglomerate wall, so that the water fell to both sides across the edge into a protruding rectangular basin, which opened up below the ground level of the Prince’s Way. Behind each of the two curtains of water, marble panels with the Salzburg Lion were framed in relief by a mosaic made from black upright river pebbles. Emerging from the panels, ornamental tendrils made from red and blue stones entwined with the black stones. In addition, water poured into the protruding basin from the open throat of a large marble mask with grotesquely distorted proportions. Water flowed from the lower basin beneath the Prince’s Way and into the canal. Since the canal started directly in front of the Neptune grotto, and the other inflows were invisible to observers, Sittikus staged the fountain figure as the ruler of the water and the source of the canal; the leisure gardens of Hellbrunn were fed by an apparently never-dwindling overflow.

To make the emergence of the water plausible, Markus Sittikus had his Neptune exert pressure on the dolphin with one hand and one foot, in order to press the water out of his mount. In this manner he updated the classical motif of hydro technology, which also reflected the physical principles of a mechanism in an artistic form; wrung-out

towels, inflated frogs, etc. This idea was supported, for example, by the handed-down observations of Pliny's "historia naturalis", according to which dolphins were able to blow water out of their noses. Book knowledge of the natural sciences was enriched by oral reports or one's own visual findings, and could be activated in such a grotto figure. If one reverses the causation, the sprouting forth of the water testifies to the fact that the stone sculptures could in fact exert pressure: one could imagine them to be alive. Rather than merely appearing on a pedestal, offered for observation as a collector's piece and relating only to itself, the sculpture became the embodiment of Neptune, who had an impact on his surroundings. The scene was extended, to a certain extent, in that the "natura altera" was animated.

By shaping the water, the prince opened up Neptune's grotto to his guests as a place of adventure that stimulated not only the sense of sight, but all other senses too. All around Neptune's grotto, the element of water changed the temperature, in that it noticeably cooled the atmosphere and generated a sensitive climactic sphere that was perceived on the skin, particularly when it had been heated by the sun. Furthermore, water stimulated the olfactory sense, just as one tends to smell a lake in the forest before seeing it. Sittikus was also able to evoke his idea of the water god among his guests by means of the sense of hearing, which is impossible to shut off. With the water and the manner in which it overflowed, fell and formed shapes, etc. he created noises that formed a sound space around the grotto. The deliberate use of sound as a parameter of spatial design can be seen in other gardens of the time. We can therefore assume a certain sensitization to the connections between sounds and shapes of water. Even before the guests saw the grotto, it called to them with the sound of irregular sloshing and murmuring, and may therefore have evoked different expectations about the origin than a monotonous babbling or a gentle rustling. It is conceivable that such a sensitised perception on the part of the guests transferred the character of the sound to the sculpture and expanded the idea of the god of the elementary force of water with such impressions. Sittikus created grotto spaces that could not be observed from the outside only, but which had to be experienced, and which appeared to awaken his idea of an arcadia suggestively in his garden.

The prince-bishop also demonstrated his erudition and cultural dexterity with the roughly-hewn conglomerate rocks, which took up the paragons between nature and art, updating them in his gardens in the antique topos of the 'vivi saxi'. Accordingly, stone was by no means dead, but rather appeared to grow out of the water. A grotto was characterised as being "endowed with the life of nature" (Plumpe 1943, 1). From 'suo ingenio' nature created grotto spaces that were populated with gods by ancient poets such as Virgil and Ovid, as mythical places. Thus the grotto became a passage between reality and the mythical arcadia. Principle builders like Markus Sittikus set themselves the challenge in their gardens – one may exaggerate here, also against the background of contemporary art theory – of realising the literary topoi of antiquity in a new interpretation, and transferring a naturally grown grotto – 'petrified' nature – into an architectural

form (Symmes 1999, 11); a form of expression that provoked knowledgeable discussion about the visual and linguistic differences between nature and art. As such, the grotto was an “elusive art form” (Plumpe 1943, 7) and during the 16th century became the most important building element in garden design.

Like other sculptures in Hellbrunn, Neptune was based on a rediscovered ancient sculpture that was erected in another park. These models were radically reworked for the Hellbrunn context, and staged differently. Knowledgeable guests will have recognised in the form of the Hellbrunn Neptune the antique sculpture of Aesculapius from the Pratolino gardens, and would have discussed Sittikus’ changes and adaptation. In its reinterpretation as the Hellbrunn Neptune, the Aesculapius figure got a dolphin as a mount, a trident, and in general received a more solid shape. Such adjustments allowed Markus Sittikus to present himself as a knowledgeable and worldly prince who was familiar with the gardens of other princes and cultural centres. Sittikus did not merely appropriate the ancients as collector’s items. He cited, indeed paraphrased the models in such a manner that erudite visitors could recognise them, that the cultural narrative shone through, and yet was also enriched with its own, Salzburg narrative. In this way the healing effect of Aesculapius and of the spring in general could be emphasised as one aspect of the Neptune grotto. It allowed the established natural space to be understood by means of its aesthetic reception, and expanded in its narrative quality with figures. The sculptures stimulated various occasions for discussion and linked the different gardens together.

Such a ‘living’ pictorial space, which addressed the prior knowledge brought by the visitor, evoked the playfulness of other gardens, and compelled discussion on antique models in their current exhibitiv contexts, had to be understood as an intended occasion for dialogue. As already established by Michael Baxandall in the context of 15th century painting, the viewing of a work was not considered to be a passive process, either in the conception or the reception. The art collections from the period around 1600 were also staged as spaces for dialogue (Welzel 1997, 503-504). Thus the prince is likely to have also presupposed such an active interaction of his guests with his garden art. Just like the painter, the prince, when laying out his garden, can also “rely on the beholder [...] to recognise the theme” and thus also the underlying mythological stories “promptly enough for him to accent, vary and adjust it in rather advanced ways.” (Baxandall 1988, 62). Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, for example, were “codes from which the fantasy of the knowledgeable [could] create his own story” (Ovid, 1992, 407-408). The narratives, so rich in images, established a common educational canon, with which each potential guest would have learned Latin. This prince could draw on this as a larger “common denominator” (Baxandall 1988, 67) of skills and cultural knowledge in the conception of his “*natura altera*”, and also the respective individual preferences and habits that could enrich discourse. With the first figure of Neptune, we can assume that Sittikus “left traces of this kind of analysis [and] thus [provided] his audience with clues, which they were very much in a position to grasp” and for which they were willing to

invest “energy and interest; in other words, [they] would not have made the effort to come so far if [they] did not enjoy the exercise to a certain degree.” (Baxandall 1988, 137-139). It was not merely as personifications of water that the sea gods, naiads and tritons brought, in Gisberti’s words: “a leisure for the soul without beginning or end” (Schaber and Schrattecker 1997, 18). The entertainment value of the gardens lay in its function as an intersection of learned culture, from which society was invited to narrate the Hellbrunn arcadia itself and to develop it in conversations between the sculptures on show. Every visit became a narrative version of its own, even for the prince:

‘non est hortamine longo
nunc< ait >utendum: vires effundite vestras;
sic opus est. Aperite domos ac mole remota
fluminibus vestris totas inmittite habenas.’
iusserat; hi redeunt ac fontibus oras relaxant
et defrenato volvuntur in aequora cursu.
Ipse tridente suo terram percussit, at illa
intremuit motuque vias patefecit aquarum. (Ovid 1992, I, 277-285)⁶

In the first book of the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid introduces Neptune for the first time with the initiation of the violent force of the great flood. The gods decided – according to Ovid – to destroy civilisation in the Age of Iron, to wash away all avarice and raw violence from the world. Zeus asked his brother to unleash the force of water. Consequently, the latter summoned all of the water gods and ordered them to open the “fountains’ mouths”. It is conceivable that learned guests in Hellbrunn recited the relevant verse in front of the Neptune grotto and discussed their idea of Neptune, other versions, presentations and viewing habits. They opened up a discursive space on which the Hellbrunn Neptune stood as an immutable reference point for the discussion, even more: incited the discussions in a particular manner by means of implicit contradictions: The proffered figure of Neptune does not, namely, refer illustratively to the described character of the earth-shaker. Rather, the calm and serene appearance and the steady spewing forth of the water contrasts with the effervescence of natural force. Therefore, while a ‘classical’ iconographical analysis must do without a reference to the cited verses by Ovid, in the methodical approach suggested here, the contemporary resonance space should be characterised. When walking through the park the prince and his guests invoked their knowledge of Ovid – and of ancient mythology in general, as well as of other gardens – and placed their experiences in Hellbrunn in this discourse, comparing, discussing, even more: they were supposed to admire and be astonished. And thus while the water god

6 “Exert all your strength. That is what is needed. Throw open your doors, drain the dams, and loose the reins of all your streams!’ Those are his commands. The rivers return and uncurb their fountains’ mouths, and race an unbridled course to the sea. himself strikes the ground with his trident, so that it trembles, and with that blow opens up channels for the waters. [...]. And now the land and sea are not distinct, all is the sea, the sea without a shore.” (Ovid 1989, I, 277-285).

displayed his ruler's insignia, the trident, to the observer, this was done so without any appearance of threat. But they also turned to the marble mask that appeared to be based on the "fountains' mouths" of Ovid's verses. In its size and prominence more than mere fountain decoration, it picked up an aspect of the narrative and upheld the strength of the doomsday scenario through the god. Comparing the visual impression in the mythological narrative strains, the following verses – and the historical visitors may well have discussed this too – would appear to capture that which was displayed:

nec mare iras manet, positoque tricuspide telo
 mulcet aquas rector pelagi supraque profundum
 extantem atque umeros innato murice tectum
 caerulum Tritona vocat [...] sonanti
 inspirare iubet fluctusque et flumina signo
 iam revocare dato [...]
 contigit et cecinit iussos inflata receptus,
 omnibus audita est telluris et aequoris undis,
 et, quibus est undis audita, coercuit omnes. (Ovid 1992, I, 328-343)⁷

If one had this verse in one's head, the grotto would have made current the personified power dictated by the element due to Neptune, the dolphin and the mask; it alluded with all of the familiar cultural variances that were introduced into the spatial work of art, the garden. Then the various tritons, blowing into their conches and emitting water into the basin, were contextualised and expanded the contexts of each individual sculpture. Thus a narrative version based on Ovid might be: As long as the tritons blow into their horns, the waters of Hellbrunn will remain calm and peaceful in their basins and courses. Yet they not only calmed the waters, but also broke through the surface of the water and kept it moving. The unleashed power could therefore be controlled by noise – through the soundwaves. The soundscape in the park assured visitors that the natural powers have been appeased, and they would only have to worry when the 'tone' changed again. Even before the prince activated the first water tricks, the guests knew of the reputation of the Hellbrunn gardens, or were aware of installations in other gardens of the day.

Ultimately – as suggested by the gardens – the mythological god allowed the elementary force to spout forth unchecked, so that the shells overflowed to his feet, the water flowed into the basin, which also overflowed, so that it flowed gushingly over the

7 "It was no longer an angry sea, since the king of the oceans putting aside his three-pronged spear calmed the waves, and called sea-dark Triton, showing from the depths his shoulders thick with shells, to blow into his echoing conch and give the rivers and streams the signal to return. [...] He lifted the hollow shell that coils from its base in broad spirals, that shell that filled with his breath in mid-ocean makes the eastern and the western shores sound. [...] it was heard by all the waters on earth and in the ocean, and all the waters hearing it were checked. Now the sea has shorelines, the brimming rivers keep to their channels, the floods subside, and hills appear. Earth rises, the soil increasing as the water ebbs, and finally the trees show their naked tops, the slime still clinging to their leaves." (Ovid 1989, I, 328-343).

edge, into the canal, and by these means into the gardens of Hellbrunn. From that point on, the water was the constant companion of the visitors.

Now lost to posterity, but described by Markus Sittikus' chronicler Stainhauser, an Amphitrite grotto was added to the Neptune grotto. As Neptune's wife, she completed the couple that ruled over the force of water, and introduced an abundance of her own mythological narratives to the gardens. She is introduced by Ovid as the elemental force in the creation of the world, when everything was still chaos:

[...] nec brachia longo
marginē terrarum porrexerat Amphitrite [...]. (Ovid 1992, I, 13f)⁸

Thus Amphitrite, and with her, water, were a primeval mythological power that represented not only the origin of the world, but also a power to vitalise things, to move or to transform them. Therefore, right at the start of the Prince's Way, the archbishop confronted his guests with the combined strength of the sea gods, started discourses, and awakened their expectations and attitudes towards the control and the shaping of water.

Prince-Bishop Markus Sittikus placed a second Neptune at the centre of the gardens. Sittikus' "natura altera" extended right into the palace architecture: At the basement level a grotto opens up to visitors, rising across two storeys and traversed by a barrel vault (fig. 3).

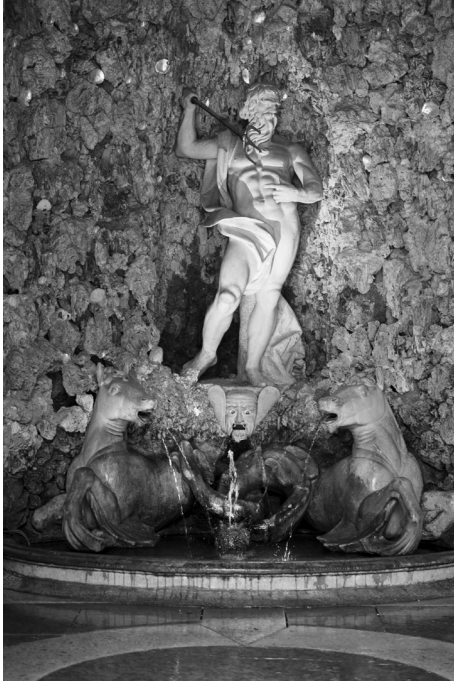


3 Salzburg, Hellbrunn (1613-1615), Neptune-grotto inside the palace.
Photo credit: author.

8 “[...] or watery Amphitrite stretching out her arms along the vast shores of the world.” (Ovid 1989, I, 13-14).

It was incredibly richly decorated, and combined valuable building materials such as marble with pebbles and tufa, without forming an aesthetic hierarchy. All of the materials were compiled in an extraordinary manner with great craftsmanship. Above the surrounding ledge, the barrel vault was elaborately decorated. In the middle, a circular fresco imagined a view through an oculus, which on the other side of the breach was surrounded by a balustrade. Unexpectedly, the guests did not view the opposite storey, but instead a sky, from which a winged Victoria with a laurel wreath appeared to float. Around this fresco, inlaid upright pebbles formed a blue background, which was structured by bands of tufa in equally sized areas. Elaborate ornaments of shells and coloured stucco elements were applied. In the process, Sittikus transformed natural elements, such as shells, into construction materials, which he arranged in such a manner that their original forms were barely discernible. While the shells maintained their white mother-of-pearl shine, their manner of overlapping and arrangement dissolved them into completely new forms (Grewenig 1984, 508). And yet no natural materials were mixed with artificial ones; rather, the possibilities of each element were exploited to the full. Structured by bands of red marble, the sidewalls of the grotto were clad with light marble. The large portal was flanked by two naiads in light marble, standing in two round-arched alcoves lined with red marble. Both wore long dresses and stood with one foot on the head of a dolphin. The right-hand naiad held her dolphin by its fin, and her opposite number raised a shell to her breast. The first attempted to keep hold of her dress, which has slipped across her shoulder. Both were artistically coiffed and wore different shell decorations in their hair. This décor was not made of real shells and snails, but was carved skilfully from the marble, imitating nature. Neither of the naiads looked towards the person entering, but instead turned their faces towards a gigantic round-arched alcove at the end of the grotto, which was clad completely in tufa and completed on the uppermost side by light-colored stucco shells. There, the oversized God of the Deep arose (**fig. 4**). With his weight on his left leg, the right leg raised slightly to gain momentum, his muscles tensed, he appeared ready to hurl the trident he was holding above his shoulder. At his feet, his two large hippocampi reared up in a semi-circular basin. Their fishtails entwined, they beat the outflowing water with their fins. With their powerful necks bent and their heads facing each other, the mythical water-horses each spewed water pranks into the basin.

Marble medallions were inserted as half reliefs beside the alcove, depicting to the left of Neptune the Salzburg Lion, to the right the Hohenems ibex. On two medallions on the exterior walls, the Salzburg Lion and the Hohenems ibex were united, forming the new coat of arms of the reigning prince-bishop. In this manner, Markus Sittikus superimposed the Palace of the Deep, where even the air became noticeably moister and fresher for visitors, with his own leisure palace. Even though Neptune's palace appeared to be separated from the actual palace due to the height of the grotto and the picturesque perspective, it actually formed its foundations. Sittikus' regency was not restricted to



4 Salzburg, Hellbrunn (1613-1615), Neptune-fountain in the grotto under the palace.
Photo credit: author.

Salzburg; with his heraldic animal the man from Hohenems inserted himself into the mythological genealogy of the god. He became the master of the water. Furthermore, the Salzburg Lion situated the Palace of the Deep in Salzburg and in the period of the rule of Markus Sittikus. The concrete leisure palace and the mythological arcadia are interwoven here intriguingly; reality and pleasurable imagination alternated incessantly.

To the left and right of the fountain, two low passages in the sidewalls led to other grottos in the basement level of the palace. The passages lay in an area of light tufa and were distinguished by surroundings of light marble. Of particular note is the attention to detail in the design, which extended to the sides of the passages. These were foreshortened, giving the illusionary impression of deeper passages and more solid walls. Two cherubs in half relief were installed above each of the passages. In keeping with the concept of the space, they had fish bodies and held a dolphin between them by his fin and his open mouth.

In this grotto it can be assumed that visitors compared the first Neptune they encountered with this second one and set the staging of each against the other. In contrast to other gardens of the period, it was not simply “another” Neptune in a group of sculptures, but thanks to their narrative sequence in the park the Hellbrunn Neptunes

reacted to each other. They were created as discourse stimulators for the guests by means of comparison, recognition and the activation of previously conducted discussions. Where the first sculpture of the god emphasized his power over the elements as propulsion for the gardens, Neptune there is nevertheless at rest and demonstrates only the trident as an insignia of his power. He did not seem to present any danger, and while the earth-shaking, quick-tempered and irascible aspects of his mythological narratives could be recited in conversation, they were not realized concretely in the spatial artwork consisting of sculpture, nature and water. Rather, the first natural grotto captured the elemental force in the calm before the storm.

The Neptune in his imposing hall of the palace was staged very differently: soaring, impelling his hippocampi, he is preparing to throw his trident. In the area in front of the grotto, a large water staircase with different drop heights had been laid out, along with two hills of boulders with water fanfares (which no longer exist), so that the roar and the rush of the water penetrated through the large portal and into the grotto, echoed against the marble walls, and filled the vault with noise. In this manner, the second Neptune grotto was dramaturgically charged to a much greater degree with its action, space and dynamism. Here, the power and strength over the force of nature was demonstrated, and at the same time the 'tone' of the water was transformed from gentle ripples to a loud roar.

Where in the first grotto, a marble mask at the foot of the god spewed water motionlessly, the one at the foot of the god in the second grotto was animated. It rolled its large green eyes incessantly with the monotony of an automaton, opened its mouth wide, spat water at viewers and stuck out its tongue scornfully. The gesture, monotony and creaking of the grotesque face appeared to make a mockery of the watching visitors. In such a moment, either Markus Sittikus or one of his guests might have recalled a verse by Ovid and recited:

[...] *genus mortale sub undis
perdere et ex omni nimbo demittere caelo.
Protinus Aeoliis Aquilonem claudit in antris
Et quaecumque fugant inductas flamina nubes,
emittitque Notum: madidis Notus evolat alis,
fronte sedent nebulae, rorant pennaque sinusque;
utque manu late pendentia nubila pressit,
fit fragor: hinc densi funduntur ab aethere nimbi.* (Ovid 1992, I, 260-269)⁹

9 “[...] resolved on a different punishment, to send down rain from the whole sky and drown humanity beneath the waves. Straight away he shut up the north winds in Aeolus’s caves, with the gales that disperse the gathering clouds, and let loose the south wind, he who flies with dripping wings, his terrible aspect shrouded in pitch-black darkness. His beard is heavy with rain, water streams from his grey hair, mists wreath his forehead, and his feathers and the folds of his robes distil the dew. When he crushes the hanging clouds in his outstretched hand there is a crash, and the dense vapours pour down rain from heaven.” (Ovid 1989, I, 260-269).

This is when the prince might have activated the water prank from the shadows of the portal. Sharp, hissing jets of water shot out of hidden nozzles in the floor and walls. The guests could do nothing but recoil, they squealed, jumped, became hectic, and just when they thought it couldn't get any worse, the prince-bishop activated another mechanism to open the floodgates of heaven, letting a downpour of water to fall from the vault and onto the group (fig. 5), intensifying the shock and the reaction of the guests. Surprised, they will have attempted to flee the grotto and the water. This was a courtly entertainment that can be dated to the early 15th century in Hesdin (Franke 1997, 135-138) and which is also documented in pictures, such as the woodcut based on Peter Paul Rubens' *Garden of Love*, widely distributed to the courts of the early modern period (Franke 2004, 52-56). In Hellbrunn, however, this tradition was outdone when the courtly society was suddenly blocked from exiting into the sunshine by a grid of hard, silver water. The thundering of the waterworks, the sharp hissing of the water pranks, the splashing of the rain was embellished – we can assume, also for Markus Sittikus' time, since these are reflex reactions – by the shrieks and the squeals of the people, who tried to get to safety. The hullabaloo grew to become a crescendo of chaos, which was amplified even further by the echo in the grotto, producing a doomsday scenario. The only exit routes were the two passages on each side of Neptune. The group is likely to have stormed towards them and shoved through them. Markus Sittikus was able to block the way back with rods of water. Shocked and confused, the group was separated in other grottos, and there was no way out. The only possibility was straight ahead. Only when it suited the prince did he halt the water.



5 Salzburg, Hellbrunn (1613-1615), waterjokes from the vault of the Neptune-grotto. Photo credit: author.

The reconstruction of such a scenario, also for the early modern period, assumes that, despite the cultural imprint of meanings given to a situation, reflex reactions are controlled neuronally and are thus a part of human nature¹⁰.

Cold jets of water on the skin are perceived as attacks and instinctively trigger mostly uncontrolled protective reactions such as cramping, shrieking or jumping. How this knowledge is treated, however, differs historically and is culturally shaped¹¹.

In Hellbrunn the prince-bishop availed of observable behavior in order to integrate them into the mechanisms of his water games, to force affects, and to set not only automata but also people in motion. Such a type of presentation was likely to have been only one variation of a visit, and could be restaged repeatedly by the prince with other groups. Especially in Italian gardens, fountains, and in particular water pranks, became an experience, something refreshing on hot summer days, and ranged, depending on the attitude of the constructor, from harmless games to almost outrageous teasing¹². The guests of the time accepted the invitation knowing, indeed expecting to be surprised and entertained by such an attraction. Each prince acted as a dramaturg, arranging nature, technology and art in his *villa suburbana* to create his own individual arcadia, where such surprises awaited for the purpose of amusement. The concept of gardens retreated further and further away from the arcadian ideal of “iucunditas, salubritas, amoenitas, venustas” and developed into places in which visitors wanted to be astonished and amazed (Gothein 1926, 270). Astonishment and amazement are the basic prerequisites, drawing on Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy, for understanding the world by experiencing greatness (Franke 1997, 139). Therefore, these elements had to be arranged innovatively and uniquely.

In Hellbrunn, the prince appealed to people’s automatic driving forces and showcased them directly. He appeared as the Lord of Hellbrunn, who “himself determined the rules of the game with full vigor” (Uerscheln 2008, 211). In his grottos, not only were the elements of art and nature animated (Schweizer 2008, 22), but the people themselves were also involved in this game. For a brief moment, the guests’ self-determination was suspended by the prince-bishop, and he directed them like figures on planned paths, driven by the power of the water. To do so, for just a moment he outsmarted the guests’

10 Comparable scenarios from different villa complexes of today’s Europe can be verified. See Franke 2003 for the intended physical and emotional participation up to the overpowering of the guests in the grottoes. The sensuous appeal of water is illustrated by an anecdote of Pope Innocent III., who felt ten years younger after the inspection of a fountain by Bernini because he was startled by the thundering water. The Pope described the boisterousness, the adrenalin pushing into the veins, the tightening muscles and that he felt alert; see Symmers 1999, 140. See Marshall 2017 for the sensuous appeal of water.

11 The dramatic employment of affects and reflex behavior is verified by the practice of theatre of the 17th century. For example, in 1638 Bernini let dams crash and the water flooded the auditorium for an end of the world scenario. The first rows did not only become wet but the spectators tried get themselves to safety. At another point the scenery was put on fire in order to create the horror of an inferno; see Nelle 2006.

12 The usage of ink as part of entertainment, which meant the destruction of valuable clothing, is verified at Merveilles in Hesdin; see Franke 2004.

comprehension, which would have risen above the sphere of his deception. Otherwise, their comprehension would have prevented their true enjoyment (Wind 1984, 71). Only by experiencing such uninhibited ecstasy could the soul be liberated and the natural limitations of intelligence are overcome (Wind 1984, 78). According to one anecdote, Pope Innocence III was shocked by a sudden downpour of water during a visit to a Bernini fountain into feeling ten years younger. Pope Innocence describes the high spirits experienced when the adrenalin enters the veins and energy shoots into the muscles and one feels wide awake (Symmes 1999, 137).

The element of water – as we have seen – had the power not only to move objects mechanically, but it also created a holistic aura that claimed all of the senses. Then as now, the impact of a sudden jet of water on naked skin caused a direct tension in people, a holding of breath, an accelerated pulse, shock, a sound of amazement and an automatic movement, whether jumping, ducking, turning away or running, before the head can make a judgement. Getting wet circumvented the head's reason and one's self-control and elicited an emotional reaction from the body. The senses were sharpened and the body felt as if it were waiting for the next ambush. The "ratio" needed a moment to master the chaos experienced by the body and to regain control of momentum (Franke 1997, 139). In Hellbrunn all of the water appeared to flow together from the central exedra and burst into the palace.

After the experience of the force of nature in Neptune's palace, a third sea god completed the water ensemble and also the leisure gardens of Hellbrunn (**fig. 6**). To the northwest of the palace there were three pools, comprising two square basins framing a



6 Salzburg, Hellbrunn (1613-1615), fountain of laying watergod, Acheloo.
Photo credit: author.

large elliptical one. The bearded figure sat on a cloth at the edge of the last basin. With his right hand he leaned on a large upended urn, and with his left hand he held a small dolphin between his legs. This is not another Neptune, but probably Achelous, who lost a horn in a battle with Hercules and who since then hid this gap with a crown of reeds in his hair. In contrast to the other two appearances by Neptune, Achelous' calmness transferred to the water. As the basins were broad and flat, the water barely flowed. Like a mirrored surface, the water was motionless in front of the god. The water from his urn and from his dolphin, and the fine streams flowing from the two conch-blowing tritons, rippled the surface only slightly and lost their strength in the width of the basins, so that the garden, the sky and the palace were reflected in sharp contours on the water's surface. This area opened up and its tranquillity invited the visitor to spend some time at the stone panel to the rear of Achelous. Only when walking towards the palace could one notice that a low water step suggested a direction of waterflow to the central gardens and via a water staircase down to the foundations of Hellbrunn Palace.

For his princely representation, Markus Sittikus acknowledged and appropriated the "*neglecta naturae dona / non absque commiseratione admirans*". By his hand he shaped it into his leisure gardens in accordance with an ancient topic: He was the prince who tamed the wildness of nature and transformed it into an arcadia. Guests gained access only by invitation, in order to experience the diversions of the prince's arcadia in his presence. Remarkably for such a location with no connection with the sea, Sittikus' focus was on water and Neptune. In his "*natura altera*" his leisure palace was based on the sensual staging of Neptune's Palace, which thanks to the prince-bishop's coat of arms was also declared to be Sittikus' palace. There the waters of Hellbrunn appeared to overflow, which he controlled in his role as Neptune, the Ruler of the Waters. With "*tot varios fontes collegit*", he transferred the dangers of the unusable boggy land into the propulsive power – indeed, the 'narrative flow' – of his arcadia. Under his regency, the water became an elementary component of his arcadia. Not only visually, but for all sensory stimuli, Sittikus' "*natura altera*" could be experienced by smell and in climactic spheres and soundscapes. By means of water games and such staging along the lines of the reinterpreted ancients, Markus Sittikus integrated himself into the cultural discourse with other gardens of his day. He did not simply imitate them for the sake of it, but rather quoted them, related their individual attractions with each other, and entered them in his Hellbrunn dramaturgy along the course of the water – he even aimed to outdo them: Sittikus showed himself to be an erudite sovereign, who established for his guests and himself a discursive space between antique heritage, the natural sciences, hydro technology and cultural narratives. Not only were the locations and the objects a cause for discussion, rather the prince exploited for his leisure the cultural "common denominator" (Baxandall 1988, 67) of his visitors and their individual experiences and attitudes.

In Hellbrunn, Prince-Bishop Markus Sittikus was a divine engineer, who created the stone water gods and tritons, controlled the uncontrollable element of water, and

managed to animate inanimate things, as well as his guests. In this intellectual game, Neptune and the water gods were the joins between reality and Sittikus' witty "natura altera". Markus Sittikus' representation was based on the shaping of the force of nature, emerging forth in his leisure gardens as an ever-bubbling spring, flowing together in his regency and invigorating his arcadia as an ingenious place of discourse. This place was conceived not only for the duration of his rule, but with the intention: "dedicated them to dear posterity".

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