

Abstract: A description of Imperial Pleasure Buildings and Gardens in the Surroundings of Vienna in an Italian Travel Diary of 1577

In the summer of 1577, two Venetian ambassadors commissioned to congratulate Emperor Rudolph II on his accession travelled to Vienna. One of them, the future Doge Leonardo Donà, wrote a diary which, apart from the events of the voyage, also offers descriptions of the places he visited. After the paragraph on Vienna he dedicated a few pages to the gardens outside the walls of the city. Regarding the gardens at the Katterburg (the forerunner to Schönbrunn) he mentions the rich population of game. At the „Grünes Lusthaus“ on the Prater-island he saw some paintings by Arcimboldo but also others which he found too lascivious. Given our limited knowledge of Maximilian II's collection, it is a rather speculative venture to identify them. An impressive structure two miles to the east of Vienna, known today as the Neugebäude, was named «The four towers» at the time of Donà's visit. His detailed description of the garden and the buildings including the still unfinished palace is the oldest one known to exist. According to his informants, the location had the disadvantage of being close to the border with the Ottoman Empire und thus was exposed to raids by Turkish forces, and might even serve as a headquarters of the commander of an army besieging Vienna. Donà does not mention, however, the legend that it was built where Sultan Suleyman's tent had stood during the siege of 1529.

Keywords/Schlagworte: Leonardo Donà; Maximilian II.; habsburgische Gärten; Arcimboldo; Neugebäude

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