

**Filippo Juvarra***Hunting Residence of Stupinigi, 1729-1733*

Begun in 1729 at the end of Vittorio Amadeo II's reign, the **Hunting Residence of Stupinigi** was designed and overseen by **Filippo Juvarra**. Construction continued during the reign of the Savoy successors Carlo Emanuele III and Vittorio Amedeo III, thereby creating a construction site that lasted throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

A number of architects were involved as supervisors of these royal works; apart from Juvarra's collaborator Giovanni Tommaso Prunotto, we recall here Ignazio Birago da Borgaro, Ludovico Bo, Ignazio Bertola and Benedetto Alfieri.

Although *Stupinigi* originated as a hunting residence, typologically it represents a **true 18<sup>th</sup> century royal palace**. In terms of its plan it is **one of the most original palaces dating to the late Baroque and Rococo periods**. It is one of the many buildings that the Savoy family commissioned to be built outside the city, following a tradition begun in France (*Fontainebleau, Versailles*) that became widespread among the European monarchies of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

The dimensions of the complex are truly **enormous** in terms of square metre area and it quickly adds up: 31050 for the main residence, another 14289 for the adjacent buildings, 155289 for the surrounding park, while 3800 are just for the exterior flowerbeds. The Complex counts 137 rooms and 17 halls.

**A Complex Plan**

Arriving from the road that draws a straight axis between Turin's *Porta Nuova* and the *Stupinigi residence*, the hunting estate's borders are marked by **two symmetrical blocks** constructed for service functions. Arranged along the longitudinal axis, these form a **vast interior semicircular courtyard followed by an octagonal one** with unevenly-measured sides, leading to a very large hexagonal courtyard.

**The true residence** is thus revealed only at the very back of the long axis, with two wings bordering the hexagonal open space. This allows us to see how **the open and closed spaces penetrate one another** and are arranged precisely to allow the residence to be the fulcrum as well as the central focal point for the whole complex's design.

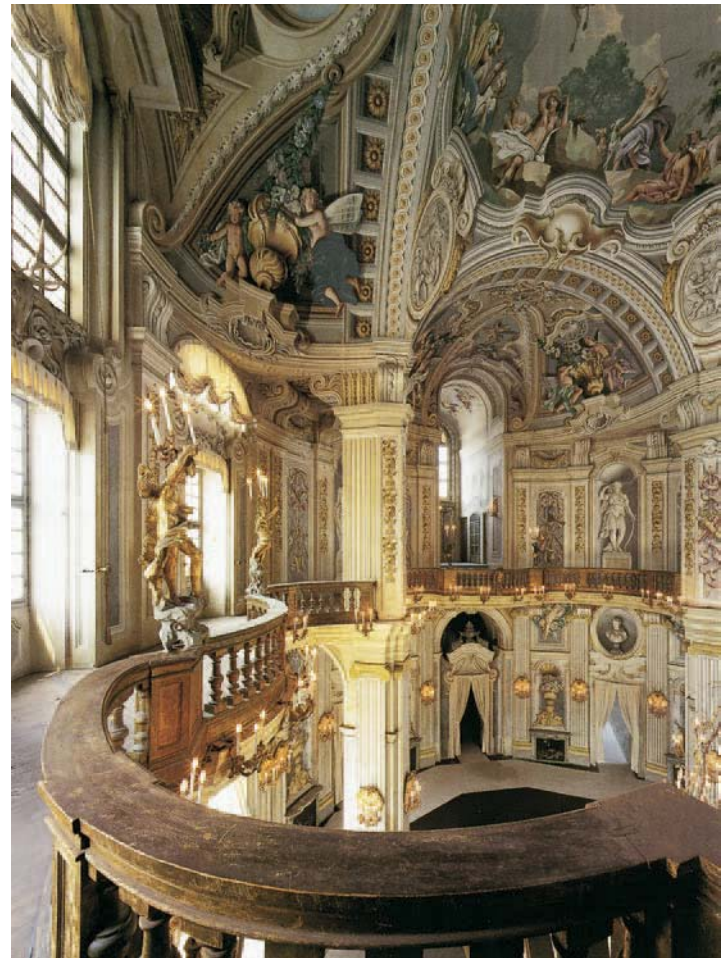
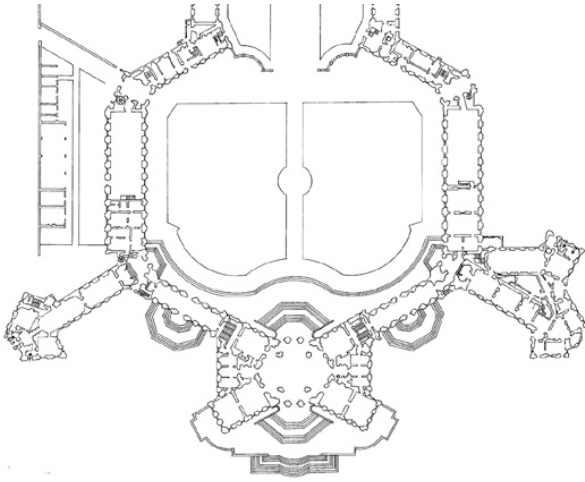
This main building has an elliptical plan at the centre, from which depart long wings, lower in height, that extend outward in the unusual layout of an oblique cross.

*Stupinigi's* detailed plan recalls some layouts of other palace buildings in Italy (**Baldassare Longhena's *Villa Contarini*** in Piazzola sul Brenta) and abroad (**Fischer von Erlach's *Palazzo Althan*** in Vienna) and can be traced to drawings by **Sebastiano Serlio**.

Juvarra's work is however completely original. As we have

**Fig. 1** Filippo Juvarra, *Hunting Residence of Stupinigi*, 1729-1733. Aerial view of the main buildings.





Above: **Fig. 2, 3, 4** Filippo Juvarra, *Hunting Residence of Stupinigi*, 1729-1733. Plan, aerial view and view of the atrium.  
 Below: **Fig. 5** Complete aerial view of the *Hunting Residence of Stupinigi* with its whole park.



mentioned, two of the palazzo's four wings define the courtyard while the other two extend slightly farther beyond the central elliptical rotunda. These wings are complemented by others (executed later by **Benedetto Alfieri**) arranged diagonally from the bevelled corners of the hexagonal courtyard. In this way the building opens and intensely interacts with the landscape.

The spaces enclosed between the buildings are designed on an equal footing with the constructed parts and work with them to create a pulsating effect through the open space. So it is clear that Juvarra was working against the mainstream of architects who tended to draw spaces together into a concentrated composition; instead he has sought to **dilate spaces** by constructing a large central opening which he then lengthens, making it radial in a form that recalls a large embrace.

In the acute angles of the two couples of wings other rooms have been made in such a way as to form two constructed blocks which rise to the same height as the residence's main nucleus. Here a **large elliptical two-story hall** expresses Juvarra's great freedom of design. The room is volumetrically defined by undulating galleries and by a first-floor balcony which, in its freely modelled form, reproduces the profile of a

clover leaf; a central canopy is supported by very high pilasters connected by a narrow walkway; the space is enclosed by a dome resting on four arches departing from the same number of pilasters.

The room has a festive quality which is communicated not only by the architectural plasticity but also by the wealth of decoration and the use of light which avoids rhetoric and strong contrast to concentrate on clearly showing the ornamentation's full effect.

Very large windows open onto the garden, illuminating stairs and galleries and creating a **suggestive continuity between architecture and nature**.

### The Park

The attention to integrating architecture and landscape is also seen in the organisation of the vast garden. The wings' luminous and almost completely smooth façades are immersed in a planned nature that unifies aspects of **both French and Italian-style gardens**.

The park was designed by **Michael Bernard**, an expert landscape architect employed by the Savoy family also for the castles of Moncalieri and Agliè. He started the Stupinigi work in 1740, giving it the geometric form of a circle. The inner spaces are arranged in an Italian-style garden with lawns and flowerbeds intersected by right-angled paths; however the wooded area surrounding the buildings does not extend endlessly – as can be seen in the *Caserta Royal Palace* grounds or in examples of some French royal residences – but rather is contained and bordered by a wall that follows the architecture's profile.