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## Medici Villas and Gardens (Italy) No 175

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### Official name as proposed by the State Party

Medici Villas and Gardens

### Location

Region: Tuscany

Provinces: Florence (10 sites), Prato (2), Lucca (1) and Pistoia (1)

Municipalities: Barberino di Mugello (1 site), San Piero a Sieve (1), Florence (5), Fiesole (1), Poggio a Caiano (1), Cerreto Guidi (1), Seravezza (1), Vaglia (1), Quarrata (1), Carmignano (1)

### Brief description

The economic, financial and political fortunes of the Medici were behind extensive patronage that had a decisive effect on the cultural and artistic history of modern Europe. Among the resulting architectural and aesthetic forms, the Medici villas, which have a profound harmony with their gardens and rural environment, are among the most original of the Italian Renaissance. The nominated property is a selection of twelve complete villas and two pleasure gardens spread out across the Tuscan countryside and close to Florence. The Medici villa and its gardens embody an ideal of the princely country residence where it was possible to live in harmony with nature and dedicate as much time to leisure pastimes as to the arts and knowledge.

### Category of property

In terms of categories of cultural property set out in Article I of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, this is a serial nomination of fourteen *ensembles*.

As ICOMOS considers that the property is a “clearly defined landscape designed and created intentionally by man”, it is therefore a *cultural landscape*.

## 1 Basic data

### Included in the Tentative List

6 January 2006

### International Assistance from the World Heritage Fund for preparing the Nomination

None

### Date received by the World Heritage Centre

30 January 2012

### Background

The property was presented at the 6<sup>th</sup> session of the World Heritage Committee Bureau (Paris, 1982) under the name *Medici villas in the Florence region*, and then withdrawn by the Italian authorities.

ICOMOS had recommended that the property's examination be deferred while recognising at the time the possibility for its future inscription under criteria (ii) and (iv), but noting that the proposed choice of eleven villas was “neither exhaustive nor sufficiently selective”. The Medici villa in Pratolino had, for example, been destroyed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the park of the Demidoff villa “had retained only the memory of wonderful Medici gardens”. The recommendation also noted that protection did not always extend to the landscape, “an essential aspect of the aesthetics of the Medici villa”, whilst the built environment had at times significantly changed. Furthermore, ICOMOS considered that the great variety of legal contexts and uses (private home, school, clinic, etc.) meant the conservation of several of the nominated property's sites was problematic.

The *Boboli Gardens* are already part of the *Historic Centre of Florence* inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1982.

### Consultations

ICOMOS consulted its International Scientific Committee on Cultural Landscapes and several independent experts.

### Technical Evaluation Mission

An ICOMOS Technical Evaluation Mission visited the property from 16 to 22 September 2012.

### Additional Information requested and received from the State Party

ICOMOS sent a letter to the State Party on 12 October 2012 requesting further details about the significant contribution of each of the sites forming the series to the potential Outstanding Universal Value, in accordance with paragraph 137b of the *Operational Guidelines*. The State Party responded on 12 November 2012 with a detailed document containing around twenty pages.

A second letter was sent to the State Party on 20 December 2012 requesting it to institute a transversal body to manage, coordinate and monitor the conservation of the sites. The State Party replied with additional documentation on 27 February 2013 that is incorporated into the present evaluation report.

Both these replies have been taken into consideration in the present evaluation.

### Date of ICOMOS approval of this report

6 March 2013

## 2 The property

### Description

The serial property comprises 12 villas and two gardens formerly associated with villas. They are located in the provinces of Florence (10 villas), Pistoia (1 villa), Prato (2 villas) and Lucca (1 villa). This latter villa (site No 10) is relatively distant from the 13 others that form an ensemble fairly tightly grouped around Florence.

The economic, financial and political fortunes of the Medici were behind extensive patronage that had a decisive effect on the cultural and artistic history of modern Europe. All the arts benefited, especially the arts of building and town planning. Among the resulting architectural forms and landscaping, the Medici villas dotted across the Tuscan countryside are among the most original and the most accomplished, illustrating the art of living and culture specific to the Italian Renaissance.

The word “villa” comes from Latin but acquired a new meaning in the Italian Renaissance, notably following the Medici’s initiatives in Tuscany. It then spread throughout Western Europe. It refers to a comfortable residence, initially in the countryside. It is usually elegantly designed and included a park or garden. It is considered a valuable microcosm in terms of its landscape, environment and climate.

The villas built by the Medici, from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, are not simple farms, like all prosperous Florentine families owned at the time in Tuscany. Nor are they castles or visible symbols of a baronial or military might. The Medici villas were innovative in form and function, embodying an ideal of the princely residence in the country where it was possible to live in harmony with nature, far from the hustle and bustle of the city and following the ideal of the *domus rustica*. In some cases, they were remodelled older buildings, such as at Cafaggiolo (site No 1), Trebbio (2) and Petraia (7), or completely new architectural creations such as Poggio a Caiano (6), Pratolino (11) and Artimino (13). The order in which the sites are presented for the serial property follows the chronology of their acquisition and their establishment as a Medici villa.

It is not a question of the development of a Medici style that would gradually be identified in stone and architectural forms, but rather a system of construction within a rural landscape, imbued with many cultural meanings and numerous typological variants, spanning three centuries of construction and development. The extreme poles are, on the one hand, the earliest style of the Michelozzo “villa – castle” dating from the first half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century (1, 2 and 3), and, on the other, the Renaissance villa of Lorenzo the Magnificent in Poggio a Caiano (6) and finally the mannerist garden in Pratolino (11). The latter two prototypes have been widely copied throughout Europe.

Part 1: The *Villa di Cafaggiolo* (Barberino di Mugello Municipality) is an ancient Medici family property acquired in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. It is located close to the road to Bologna. It was originally a medieval farm. In 1451, Cosimo the Elder asked the architect Michelozzo to restructure it and make it grander while also transforming it into a summer residence with a garden for leisure and rest. The ancestral home of the Medici, it retains the overall aspect of a medieval building with different sized square towers and machiolated battlements. In plan, it is a square-shaped complex, determined by the assemblage of medieval buildings and additional buildings around two asymmetrical courtyards. It is the prototype of the early fortified Medici villa. This is the typical transitional solution between medieval and Renaissance architecture and the first appearance of the *domus rustica*. A west wing facing the gardens was added in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, along with several interior renovations. A change was also noted in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but without making any major alteration to the ensemble or to its architectural characteristics. The garden is a wide flat lawn.

Part 2: The *Villa del Trebbio* (San Piero a Sieve) was acquired in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, in the early days of the rise in the Medici’s fortunes. It was built on the ruins of a Lombard tower. Also restored by Michelozzo, its architecture retains medieval motifs with a large square tower closely associated with a tall residential building punctuated with regular window openings on its first floor. The internal courtyard has a glazed loggia with slender pillars and an exterior staircase. The main building is crowned with an exterior walkway in medieval style. Located on the top of a hill, it dominates the Mugello Plain whilst retaining its appearance of a cloistered residence. This tall and austere ensemble was connected to its garden in the 15<sup>th</sup> century via a pergola walk with Roman-inspired columns.

Part 3: The *Villa di Careggi* (Florence) was acquired by the Medici in 1417, north of Florence. Like the previous villas, it was rearranged by Michelozzo and its general structure and its architectural motifs still closely reflected the late medieval spirit, notably through the stylistic use of a crenelated overhanging parapet. For the first time, a relationship between the villa and its surrounding countryside was deliberately sought by the removal of walls in order to open up perspectives. It has one of the first examples of a loggia decorated with arabesques. It displays a new cultural ambition, participating in the Medici’s urban activities through its close proximity to the city while still remaining a rural villa. It hosted the Platonic Academy with Cosimo the Elder and Lorenzo the Magnificent. Two porticoes show a Renaissance style: the western one opens onto a lawn overlooking the surrounding landscape. The internal courtyard has two galleries. The villa has fine interior decoration dating back to several periods of occupation by the Medici. There is a garden in front of the main façade and a large landscaped park surrounding the villa on all sides. Today, it lies at the edge of a hospital complex, of which it was a part until 2000.

Part 4: Construction of the *Villa Medici in Fiesole* (Fiesole) was started in 1458 by Michelozzo. This is the first of the Medici's architectural creations that abandons medieval references. The sloping roof and round tiles are now visible from the outside. It is the first example of a Medici villa that fully integrates the values of Humanism and the Renaissance, to the extent that it became one of the reference models together with Poggio a Caiano (No 6). It is located on a steep slope overlooking the Arno Valley. With its terraced gardens, it is also a characteristic component of the Florentine landscape. Its structure complies with Léon Batista Alberti's criteria of symmetry, and the rational distribution of space and light. In appearance, it is a cube-shaped ensemble incorporating arcaded loggias opening onto the terraced gardens, the countryside and the valley looking towards Florence. The ensemble is particularly well adapted to the site's morphology, and its architecture and planted components balance each other, while still retaining an organic relationship with their surrounding landscape. Here, the villa becomes a place where humanist intellectuals and artists meet, thereby forming an emblematic place of the literary and artistic renewal of the Renaissance.

Part 5: *Villa di Castello* (Florence) was acquired in 1477 by the Medici. It is an ensemble built on a hillside location, northeast of the city. It was extensively remodelled in relation to its natural and rural environment featuring olive groves. The villa is rectangular in form and built around a central courtyard of the 16<sup>th</sup> century; its style is close to that of an urban ensemble. It has loggias open to the outside. Its garden is considered the prototype for the Italian Renaissance garden in which water, plants and mineral elements blend harmoniously in fountains, grottoes and topiaries. The terrace closest to the villa has 16 square beds. The central fountain includes an ensemble of bronze sculptures and a water jet that was considered a wonder of hydraulic engineering. The greenhouses on the second terrace were an important place for experimenting with the conservation of exotic species and plant hybridisation, notably for ornamental plants. A grotto, ponds and a collection of animal and allegorical statues are still renowned. The villa and its gardens claim to be an illustration of the genius and influence of Cosimo I, who sought to dominate nature and her mysteries, to which he brought order and harmony. The Castello garden is presented as the most typical and best preserved example of the Italianate garden that has come down to us today.

Part 6: *Villa di Poggio a Caiano* (Poggio a Caiano) also sits on an elevated site. Guiliano da Sangallo was commissioned to carry out the work that started in 1479. It is a vast enclosure at the centre of which lies the villa. The relationship between architecture and nature reaches its apotheosis here. The villa stands on a square platform with an arcaded gallery. Its plan is H-shaped. The entrance façade has a staircase and entrance portico whose proportions are perfectly balanced. It is a clear and elegant style in which the geometric relationships between the base, façade and portico are fully mastered. The villa ensemble is deliberately designed to relate to the

composition of the surrounding landscape. It includes a certain number of references harking back to Hellenistic times. The combination of classical architectural components and the wealth of its new decorative elements blend in a type of balance that will later be used by Serlio, Palladio and Vasari. Lorenzo the Magnificent made it an "old residence in the ancient style", a model villa respecting both the *de re rustica* and the ideal place of the *otium* in a humanised nature (Chastel). It is considered the first fully accomplished Renaissance villa. Today, it houses one of the museums of the Medici collections. It also has important 16<sup>th</sup> century wall paintings, notably in the central hall.

Part 7: The *Villa La Petraia* (Florence) was acquired by Cosimo I and remodelled to form a princely residence, starting in 1544. The villa occupies a panoramic position. Its architecture is characterised by a closed, compact square plan, a central courtyard and a massive tower. One side is mannerist with large openings linking with the gardens below; the façade of the other side facing uphill is dominated by the tower and reminiscent of medieval architecture with small windows opening onto a vast area planted with oak and cypress. The courtyard wall paintings include the *Splendour of the Medici* by Volterrano. The courtyard was covered with a metal and glass roof in 1872 to turn it into a ballroom. Significant interior changes date from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The gardens are on several levels and include many trees and flower beds; a fountain attributed to Tribolo includes bronze statuary by Giambologna. The southeast corner of the upper garden forms an architectural belvedere with stucco decoration. A vast landscaped park with a pond completes the ensemble.

Part 8: The *Boboli Gardens* (Florence) lie within a property acquired by the Medici in 1550. Designed as a princely garden and theatrical place to complement the Pitti Palace, it is now part of the Historic Centre of Florence. The gardens were designed in two stages: the first is linked to their acquisition by Eleanor of Toledo, the second is the gardens' extension in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century up to the city's Roman Gate, incorporating the former defensive system of Cosimo I. With various levels and at times steep slopes, the gardens are arranged along two main axes that intersect at the Fountain of Neptune. Leading off these, a series of terraces and paths unfold to reveal perspectives lined with statues, planted ensembles, walled gardens, architectural motifs, etc. These gardens are not only the largest example of the Renaissance Italianate garden, but also the prototype *par excellence* of a unified and coherent architectural and landscaped complex. The collection of art and sculpture includes unique works and the gardens are an ideal open-air museum. The gardens also house significant plant collections. This archetype was in particular adopted by Marie de' Medici in France.

Part 9: The *Villa di Cerreto Guidi* (Cerreto Guidi) was also acquired in the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century by the Medici. It is located on the top of a hill, in the heart of Cerreto Guidi, a village that owes much of its growth to the villa. It commands a vast land complex belonging to the family dynasty. Its

compact block typology is arranged around the central hall, accessed directly from the entrance. The living spaces are grouped along the sides. Its main façade is characterised by its decorative simplicity, whereas the access to the entrance esplanade is made by four symmetrical and monumental stair ramps, which create an imposing basement housing the stables. The ensemble is both simple and effective, in particular for those areas reclaimed by drainage. Attributed to Buontalenti, this model of villa was to become widespread in Tuscany. The building includes reconstructed decoration that claims to be faithful to historic records. Today, the villa houses a museum.

Part 10: The *Palazzo di Seravezza* (Seravezza) was also acquired and transformed in the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century by the Medici, in Lucca province. Located in the foothills of the Apuan Alps, it looks out over a farming landscape and a mountain valley that have retained their main features. It was initially a border defence post that was also used for hunting and managing the nearby quarries. The building borrows solutions from the period's military architecture. It was long used as the town hall. Today, it is an archives and exhibition centre.

Part 11: *Parco di Pratolino* (Vaglia) belonged to an ensemble started in 1568 by the Medici family, under the direction of Buontalenti. Covering 24 hectares, it is located on the eastern flank of Monte Uccellatoio. The original villa no longer exists, and was in part replaced by a residence of the nobility built at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Various Medici buildings remain nearby and within this site, including the stables. The garden has lakes, grottoes, an aqueduct, statuary, pools and fishponds associated with a vast 16<sup>th</sup> century hydraulic system. It is not a traditional garden as it is more irregular, and ushers in the concept of the park. It has sometimes been referred to as a mannerist garden or "garden of wonders". This concept of an artificial nature contained within a natural environment is also found in Bavaria (Germany) and Saint-Germain-en-Laye (France). The huge "Apennine Colossus" sculpture by Gianbologna still retains its place as the focal point at the centre of the Pratolino gardens.

Part 12: *Villa La Màgia* (Quarrata) became part of the Medici assets in 1584. This princely villa is located in a strategic position on a hill. It is surrounded by a mainly hilly landscape, traditionally given over to mixed farming (grapes, cereals and olives). This landscape was, however, altered by industrialisation in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Work on restructuring the villa is attributed to Buontalenti. It is a compact, closed quadrangular construction built around a central courtyard. It has two projecting wings. The rich interior decoration, notably on the first floor, dates from several periods. The exterior areas were extensively restructured by Buontalenti, with the creation of an artificial lake, and a hunting and fishing park. There are also parterre gardens with stone and ceramic borders, and two orangeries. Today, the site is a contemporary art centre.

Part 13: *Villa di Artimino* (Carmignano) was begun in 1593. It is located on a high crest and has a remarkable

panoramic view over the Arno Valley, Pistoia Plain and the Apuan Alps. It is a typically Tuscan landscape with large forests enclosing meadows and fields. The villa is a fortified rectangular building with corner bastions. This military appearance is softened by the eastern terrace and the first floor loggia that opens onto a grand staircase, an architectural masterpiece. This arrangement is attributed to Buontalenti and was inspired by several earlier Medici villas. It forms a compromise between the requirements of a somewhat isolated position and new construction and decorative motifs. The building is also notable for its many chimneys.

Part 14: *Villa del Poggio Imperiale* (Florence) was acquired by the Medici in the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, but the alterations were only undertaken starting in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. It is located on the Hill of Arcetri, around 1 km from Florence's Roman Gate in a remarkable landscape environment. This late property was intended to replace the Pitti Palace as the princely residence because of its size and the richness of its furnishings. The typology used is that of an urban palace with an interior courtyard. The building is in the form of a compact, rectangular central block arranged around three courtyards, with two massive lateral wings perpendicular to the main façade. They frame a semi-circular space that could be used for theatrical presentations and festivities. The main façade is Neoclassical, with a central gallery. This site is innovative for the perspective of its "grand road" leading towards the urban space. Already included in plans when the property was remodelled in 1622, the current axis only dates from 1681. The palace is described as sumptuous. Today, it houses a private school.

The common denominator of the Medici villas is not found in any regular organisation of their volumes or their layouts, nor in a stylistic or decorative similarity making them a specific type of construction, but rather it should be sought in the geometric rationality of the buildings and their ordered relationship with their gardens and surrounding landscapes. As a serial ensemble, these various villas and gardens clearly express the semantic versatility (architectural, cultural and technical) of the model of the Renaissance villa as defined by the best authors (André Chastel and James S. Ackerman).

The nominated series represents the power of the Medici family that reigned over Tuscany for three centuries. It is testimony to a territorial network the aim of which was to control the roads. The unique character of these villas, the veritable stylistic and landscape signatures of the Medici, announce to the traveller that he or she has entered Tuscany. The aim was not just to demonstrate political pre-eminence, but also commercial power, and cultural and artistic influence, whilst retaining the character of the fortified house specific to a rural residence.

In addition to the Medici's regional power, the property also illustrates the innovative way this region was organised and managed, the resultant residence style, the dialectic relationship established between the architecture and the landscape through the intermediary of the garden,

and the intellectual and artistic climate that developed around this princely habitat and which is one of the fundamental traits of the Italian Renaissance. Lastly, the gallery of remarkable people who frequented these places and who have left behind significant traces make it a true "place of memory" according to the concept of Pierre Nora.

The unity of the ensemble of the Medici villas is in particular highlighted by a pictorial collection of the Villa di Artimino, attributable to G. Utens (ca. 1600), and a set of engravings by G. Zocchi of the villas (18<sup>th</sup> century). The villas form an agricultural, rural and sometimes urban or forest ensemble that is generally well preserved for the 14 sites proposed for inscription.

### **History and development**

The social, political and cultural history of the Medici family profoundly affected the course of the Italian Renaissance, and continued from the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century through to the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, either in their role as governors of Florence, then its princes, and several popes and royal and princely spouses in Europe.

The wealth of the Medici was affirmed by Giovanni de' Medici, an illustrious merchant and banker involved in governing the city of Florence at the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> and the start of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The Medici's property assets in Tuscany were initially limited to the Mugello region (sites 1 and 2), and then extended to Careggi (3), all close to the city.

The family's political ascendancy over the city was affirmed by Cosimo the Elder, especially from 1434 onwards, when the Medici's banking power extended throughout the whole of Europe. He invested his income in architecture and artistic works. While the family's assets grew (4), above all, he commissioned the architect Michelozzo to undertake major restoration and remodelling work on existing properties. He died in 1464.

The family's other outstanding figure in the 15<sup>th</sup> century was Lorenzo the Magnificent who governed a city then at its economic, cultural and artistic peak, until 1492. Acquisitions in the second half of the century were made by family members (5) and especially by Lorenzo himself in Poggio a Caiano (6) and many other places around Tuscany.

The campaign by the King of France in Italy led to the Medici's loss of political power in Florence in 1494, which they only regained through the intervention of Pope Leo X, Lorenzo's second son, in 1513, then of Pope Clement VII. The Duchy of Florence was instituted in 1531, by Alessandro de' Medici, with the support of the Habsburgs, bringing the troubled period to an end.

Cosimo I, the son of a younger branch, acceded to the ducal throne in 1537 starting a long reign during which Florence regained its independence and extended its territorial domination. The Medici's personal assets were further extended at this time (7, 9 and 10). During the first

half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the Medici turned their property acquisitions to marshes, lakes and forests, accompanied by improvements and the establishment of reserves. The architect and painter Buontalenti was, throughout these years, one of the leading figures both at the Tuscan Court and in their property and landscape projects, whilst engineers such as Tribolo resolved many of the garden problems, notably hydraulics.

The son of Cosimo I, Francesco I, succeeded him and ruled from 1574 to 1587. He, too, expanded the dynasty's assets (11 and 12), as did his brother Ferdinando I (13) who succeeded him from 1587 to 1609. They continued to entrust Buontalenti with their villa and garden projects, notably in Pratolino (11) and Artimino (13), two ensembles considered magnificent by their contemporaries and surpassing all that had been achieved up to that point in the realm of the country villa.

Alongside the family's endowments of villas and land, there was considerable sale, transfer and purchase activity at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and for much of the following one.

The 17<sup>th</sup> century corresponded with a gradual weakening of the Duchy's political and cultural influence during the reigns of Cosimo II (1609-1621) and then Ferdinando II (1621-1670). The last major works took place during his long reign, especially the renovation of Poggio Imperiale by Giulio Parigi.

The last Medici dukes to reign were Cosimo III (1670-1723) then Gian Gastone (1723-1737). The Duchy, drained of all its past influence and impoverished, then passed into the hands of a prince of the Hapsburg family, Francis of Lorraine.

Numerous villas and estates were sold and left the ducal domain in 1789. The proceeds were used to restore and glorify Poggio Imperiale (14) and the Boboli Gardens (8). Extensive work was carried out by the Habsburgs of Lorraine in the first two thirds of the 19<sup>th</sup> century on Poggio Imperiale (14) and Pratolino (11).

With the Unification of Italy and then the Kingdom of Italy, many Medici villas were allocated by the State to public use, others were sold, and a few remained in the hands of the House of Savoy.

## **3 Justification for inscription, integrity and authenticity**

### **Comparative analysis**

The State Party has compiled an historic overview of the influence exercised by the Medici villas and gardens over the creation or modification of numerous properties throughout modern and Europe at the time, up to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It examines the role of individuals, princes, artists, architects, gardeners, etc., in the genesis of projects and their ties with the Medici of Tuscany and their work.

It then compares the Medici villas and gardens to several properties already inscribed on the World Heritage List. Four of them are Italian: Ferrara, City of the Renaissance, and its Po Delta (1995, criteria (ii), (iii), (iv), (v) and (vi)); Villa d'Este, Tivoli (2001, criteria (i), (ii), (iii), (iv) and (vi)), especially the gardens considered less well preserved; Residences of the Royal House of Savoy (1997, criteria (i), (ii), (iv) and (v)), typical of monumental European architecture; and City of Vicenza and the Palladian Villas of the Veneto (1994, criteria (i) and (ii)), renowned for its design and construction brilliance. These various properties are considered, notably with regard to their gardens, as being inferior to those of the Medici villas, because of the latter's hydraulic installations. Their rural unity and the continuity of the Medici's building work over three centuries also provide a unique characteristic.

The comparison is then extended to a series of international properties considered in relation to the Medici villas and gardens: in Germany, Palaces and Parks of Potsdam and Berlin (1990, criteria (i), (ii) and (iv)), and Garden Kingdom of Dessau-Wörlitz (2000, criteria (ii) and (iv)); in France the Loire Valley between Sully-sur-Loire and Chalonnes (2000, criteria (i), (ii) and (iv)). It then continues with the examination of royal residences and gardens in France, England and of the Hapsburgs.

ICOMOS considers that the argument of the remarkable hydraulic work associated with certain Medici gardens needs to be balanced against their state of preservation. The series of Palladian villas indeed provide an excellent example for comparison. Their unity is certainly not rural or political in nature, but masterfully stylistic, and the comparison is not necessarily in favour of the nominated property, which is far more composite and demands extensive historical and cultural explanation to reveal its meaning. The comparison with the three other European properties quickly comes up against significant limitations. The first two do not refer to the same historical period, although they are certainly garden cultural landscapes and palaces, but are more homogeneous. The Loire Valley includes royal and princely castles, but the unity here is provided by the river. The comparison with other royal residences and gardens in Europe is somewhat excessive because, despite their success, the Medici cannot be raised to the level of sovereigns reigning over empires or vast, fully unified national territories. A more appropriate comparison might be the noble residences of the Île-de-France, also built during the same epoch and which represent a type of noble intermediary between the royal court and land managers, or even the neo-Palladian villas in England that testify to the country living of powerful but not royal aristocratic families.

In conclusion, it is a humanist concept of life in the country that works in the favour of the nominated property. This is reflected in an evolving architectural form spanning three centuries, comprised of villas opening onto the outside world, in symbiosis with their gardens and the surrounding rural landscape. The panoramic views are remarkable and the perspectives sought between the buildings, gardens and the rural environment form a particularly well

balanced and innovative ensemble. The world of the Medici villas is by definition open to an art of living that relates directly to the artistic, literary and scientific progress of the Italian Renaissance, of which it is one of the main centres. The ensemble affirms the presence of a long-term political, economic and cultural power over an entire region. The presence of the gardens encouraged technological progress, such as the scientific study of plant species.

From a comparative point of view, the series is justified by the State Party by the choice of the most characteristic and best preserved sites, which led to a selection that rejected around twenty Tuscan Medici villas in order to retain just fourteen.

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ICOMOS considers that the comparative analysis justifies consideration of this property for the World Heritage List.

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#### **Justification of Outstanding Universal Value**

The nominated property is considered by the State Party to be of Outstanding Universal Value as a cultural property for the following reasons:

- The Medici established a system of regional control, in defensive, political, economic, cultural and symbolic terms, through the proliferation of villas with gardens.
- The property expresses the evolution of the rural aristocratic residence in close relationship with the development of Humanism and the Renaissance; the villa is a place with numerous social and cultural functions.
- The Medici villas and gardens form the first example of the connection between habitat, gardens and the environment; they contribute to the emergence of an aesthetic sensibility for landscape and panoramas in Europe.
- Rural architecture acquired a baronial dignity both through the Medici princes' commissions and the great artists who responded to them.
- For the first time, suburban residences became showcases for artistic treasures: rare manuscripts and books, statuary, collections of paintings, etc.
- The definition of the garden is as much aesthetic as rational; it is the result of clear boundaries, geometric concepts, regular flower beds, a central axis in relation to the villa, and significant hydraulic work for both functional and decorative purposes.
- The Medici villas and gardens were a constant reference for all similar Italian and European princely residences.

The serial justification is based on the concept of the aristocratic villa in the countryside, developed by the Medici dynasty throughout its long history spanning three centuries. The typological forms evolved, providing historical markers for political, economic and cultural thought marking the main stages in the Italian Renaissance. The relationship between buildings, gardens and the rural environment led to the concept of

the cultural landscape for the first time in Europe. All the components of the property underscore this definition, which unites them.

ICOMOS recognises that the property forms a series of “clearly defined landscapes designed and created intentionally by man”, and so it forms a *cultural landscape* within the meaning given in the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*.

In its reply to the request from ICOMOS, the State Party provided additional details for the serial justification. The choice was guided by the need to identify sites that all illustrate, to the highest degree, exceptional visual harmony between the built components, the composition of the gardens and the surrounding landscape. Based on this constant common ground, each of the nominated property's sites illustrates a high point in the architectural, aesthetic or intellectual history of the Italian Renaissance and/or the political-economic history of Florence. Finally, a detailed analysis of the contribution of each of the sites in architectural, decorative, landscape and historical terms to the overall value was presented.

In conclusion, ICOMOS considers that this justification is appropriate. The property provides a series of precise and complementary testimonies, in the form of villas, gardens and landscapes that illustrates the evolution in man's relationship with his rural and natural environment from the end of the Middle Ages to the 17<sup>th</sup> century. These places fully express the new humanist ideas and their development, both through a series of residential ensembles built in an aesthetic relationship with their natural environment, and the establishment of an art of living in the countryside expressing the cultural, artistic and scientific renewal of the Italian Renaissance, especially in Florence under the aegis of the Medici.

### **Integrity and authenticity**

#### **Integrity**

The property is presented by the State Party as expressing in a complete and unified manner the concept of the Medici rural aristocratic villa, each part of which has been preserved in its original integrity through remarkable continuity of management. The close association of the villa, its gardens and its environment has been preserved with integrity, notably by the careful conservation of the sites and the adequate protection of the environments in the form of landscaped or forested areas. The natural, architectural and landscape components have not undergone any significant changes, preserving good visual integrity and a good sense of the structural and functional integrity of the nominated villa and garden ensembles.

ICOMOS considers that the State Party's proposition regarding the property's integrity requires some qualification, while still considering its overall level acceptable. Extensive restorations and at times complete remodelling have occurred at a significant number of the

sites comprising the serial property, sometimes as early as the 18<sup>th</sup> century, then in the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, notably as a result of changed use or extensive rearrangements of buildings and gardens as new owners took over. The Pratolino villa was destroyed and replaced by buildings that bear no relation to the original; similarly, the neoclassical façade of Poggio Imperiale. Nonetheless, it is true that much of this past work has been carried out in the spirit of continuity of residential use or public purpose that has respected the original. The same applies to the initial rural environment around the various sites which, prior to recent landscape conservation efforts, was often undermined by pockets of urban (sites 3, 6 and 7) and at times industrial (5) development. In Pratolino (11), the garden was abandoned for a relatively long time, which has affected its integrity.

Today, there is an identified heritage of 36 major villas created by the Medici in Tuscany. Of these, just 14 have been selected and 22 have been excluded, despite at times having significant heritage and high quality artistic testimonies. The selection of the sites (villa with garden, villa alone or garden alone) has been limited to those with the highest integrity in terms of composition, the most characteristic in terms of sustained use as a residential villa and finally those sites that have been least affected by later modifications. Each of the selected sites illustrates the architectural, landscape and philosophic meaning of the Medici princely residence in the country. The State Party has provided additional justifications (see justification for the property's value above).

ICOMOS considers that despite some reservations due to the changes made to certain sites and their environment, at times affected by changing usage and modern development, the serial nomination forms an ensemble with sufficient integrity to testify credibly and adequately to its Outstanding Universal Value. The serial composition has been fully justified. A significant effort to conserve the characteristic landscapes associated with the sites, those still preserved to this day, has been announced by the State Party.

#### **Authenticity**

For the State Party, the property's authenticity resides primarily in the continuous respect for its original architectural and landscape identity, including the later changes justified by the necessities of modern life. The current appearance of the nominated serial property has retained the mark of the Medici, their ideals and their lifestyles. They themselves continuously adapted the sites to fit with the economic, cultural and political requirements encountered over a period spanning more than three centuries. In this living and dynamic vision of the Medici villa, the state of preservation of the sites forming the series is remarkable, because it has been protected by continual management concerned with maintaining the spirit of an art of living in a natural and cultural environment of the highest quality. In general, there has been no major transformation wrought with the changes in ownership, whether the owners have been public or

private. Today, all the sites for the nominated serial property are managed in a way that protects the conservation of the authenticity of both the villas and the gardens. The protection of the surrounding landscape and natural environment, referred to above, also contributes to protecting the authenticity. Finally, abundant and high quality documentation contributes to specific knowledge of the various stages associated with the definition of authenticity of the sites, and to precise knowledge about their contents and changes over time, not just for the architectural and decorative components, and the structure and plant management of the gardens, but also for the composition of the landscapes and panoramas.

ICOMOS notes with interest the dynamic and lively approach to authenticity adopted by the State Party, as a function of historic adaptation in accordance with an architectural, landscape and cultural paradigm, while not sharing all the, at times optimistic, conclusions it reaches. Firstly, such an approach is credible as it is based on very extensive and high quality architectural, literary and iconographic documentation, and also on in-depth knowledge of the cultural and political history of the Medici in Florence together with the history of each of the sites that make up the nominated series. The conclusions drawn on a case-by-case basis for each of these sites is interesting and welcome, but they occasionally rely more on the brilliance of the illustrations and on a literary art of synthesis than on a critical analysis of the architectural and decorative condition of each of the built components and the composition of the gardens or landscapes. Often, the precise information about the sites' authenticity is indirect and scattered, or has been noted visually. The case-by-case study reveals several notable reservations about certain restoration or transformation choices attributable to a change in use, notably in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century through to the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In particular, ICOMOS notes the following changes of use: a convent (site No 1), hospital (3), town hall (10), conference centre (13) or boarding school (14), that may have affected the authenticity of the buildings.

In conclusion, for ICOMOS, those components of the sites testifying to the preservation of the authenticity of the architectural forms, the preservation of the decorative styles and materials, the composition of the gardens, uses of the places that are respectful of the Medici's achievements and ideals, and the preservation of the main components of the landscapes, largely offset the reservations raised during the critical examination of each of the sites that make up the serial property. For those attributes whose authenticity has suffered, several are the subject of a restoration or usage reassignment programme, notably as museums or cultural venues.

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ICOMOS considers that despite several specific reservations the conditions of integrity and authenticity have been met.

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**Criteria under which the inscription is proposed**

The property is nominated on the basis of cultural criteria (i), (ii), (iv) and (vi).

*Criterion (i): represent a masterpiece of human creative genius;*

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that the series of Medici villas and gardens form a cultural property of unified character. It includes extraordinary architectural and artistic works produced by many leading artists. These works were borne out of a historic relationship between nature and culture at the time of the Renaissance.

ICOMOS considers that the development of the *domus rustica* by the Medici's architects and the artists benefiting from their patronage has resulted in a remarkable series of villas, gardens, landscapes and technical and artistic works over a long period of history. While it is a contribution testifying to an aspect of the creative genius of the Italian Renaissance, the Medici rural aristocratic villas and gardens (leaving aside the Boboli Gardens which are already recognised under this criterion as part of a different property) do not justify this criterion by themselves. Even if the Medici villas are a reference and a major source of inspiration in Italy and in Europe (criterion (ii)), they do not constitute a fully defined architectural and aesthetic form identifiable at a given historical time, unlike the Palladian model for example. From this point of view, the property's undeniable great qualities fit fairly typically with criterion (iv), providing eminent examples, throughout several centuries, of various adaptations of a building ideal.

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ICOMOS considers that this criterion has not been justified.

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*Criterion (ii): exhibit an important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design;*

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that the property illustrates in an exceptional manner the ideals and tastes that appeared and were adopted in Italy during the Renaissance, and which later spread throughout Europe. The property was one of the places privileged to be the birthplace of a new art of living specific to the political-economic elite in Florence, and which became a widely adopted model. It is testimony to the emergence of a concept of European modernity through the rebirth of the arts, sciences and technology. It provides an early representation of the alliance between political power, the economy and culture. It witnessed the birth of Humanism and the Renaissance, becoming one of the main centres for its influence. The relationship between nature and culture occurred here in an innovative way both through architecture, the art of gardens and their technical equipment, and through the invention of the European cultural landscape *par excellence*. This gave rise to a lasting model for the suburban villa closely tied to its garden and landscape.

ICOMOS considers that the Medici villas and gardens in Tuscany are testimony to a synthesis of the aristocratic rural residence at the end of the Middle Ages, which incarnated a series of new political, economic and aesthetic ambitions. Villas and gardens formed models that spread widely throughout Italy during the Renaissance and then to the whole of modern Europe.

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ICOMOS considers that this criterion has been justified.

*Criterion (iv): be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history;*

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that the property constitutes a new type of suburban baronial residence based on a new relationship between the city and countryside, aimed at a specific territorial organisation. It employs human intervention in natural elements to promote the cultural and artistic objectives specific to Humanism and the Renaissance, evident in a series of incomparable Tuscan landscapes. It influenced the notion of the European cultural landscape. The Medici gardens are, still today, considered as an example and an exceptional historical model of the Italianate garden, a fundamental contribution to the development and dissemination of the art of topiary.

ICOMOS considers that the Medici baronial residences provide eminent examples of the rural aristocratic villa dedicated to leisure, the arts and knowledge. Over a period spanning almost three centuries, the Medici developed many innovative architectural and decorative forms. The ensemble is testimony to the technical and aesthetic organisation of the gardens in association with their rural environment, giving rise to a landscape taste specific to Humanism and the Renaissance.

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ICOMOS considers that this criterion has been justified.

*Criterion (vi): be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance;*

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that the Medici villas and gardens were always places of reflection or encounter for men of science and culture, artists and poets. They form an exemplary series testifying to an architectural culture in symbiosis with nature and the landscape. They express Humanism and the Renaissance in which all the arts formed a unified body of knowledge that manifested itself comprehensively for the first time in these places under the aegis of the Medici family.

ICOMOS considers that the villas and gardens, together with the Tuscan landscapes of which they are a part, made an early and decisive contribution to the birth of a new aesthetic and art of living. They are testimony to an

exceptional cultural and artistic patronage developed by the Medici. They form a series of major places related to the emergence of the ideals and tastes of the Italian Renaissance, followed by their diffusion throughout Europe.

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ICOMOS considers that this criterion has been justified.

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ICOMOS considers that the serial approach is justified and that the selection of the serial components is appropriate.

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In conclusion, ICOMOS considers that the nominated property meets criteria (ii), (iv) et (vi) and that the conditions of authenticity and integrity have been demonstrated.

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#### **Description of the attributes of the Outstanding Universal Value**

- The property includes an ensemble of villas and gardens remodelled or built by the Medici in the Tuscan countryside, from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 17<sup>th</sup> centuries.
- The property expresses the evolution of the rural aristocratic residence in close relation to the development of Humanism and the Renaissance. The villa became the place for a new art of living, with numerous social, cultural and intellectual functions.
- The property is the expression of a system of territorial control in defensive, political, economic, cultural and symbolic terms.
- The Medici villas and gardens are the first European example of the connection between residence, gardens and the environment; they contributed to the emergence of an aesthetic sensibility towards nature and the landscape recomposed by Man.
- Rural architecture acquired baronial dignity both through the Medici prince's commissions and the great artists who responded to them; the villas became showcases containing artistic treasures: collections of statues, murals and paintings, rare manuscripts and books, etc.
- The Medici villas and gardens were a constant aesthetic and cultural reference for princely residences in Europe.

#### **4 Factors affecting the property**

The protection of the nominated sites is not subject to any direct development issues now or in the future. On the other hand, the buffer zones in urban or periurban areas are subject to the development of housing, commercial and services activities, and transport infrastructure in some cases.

Specific pressure is noted by the presence of a large hospital at the boundary of Careggi (site No 3) and by the

proximity to industrial facilities and an airport on the plain at the foot of Castello (5).

The sites open to the public are visited by a relatively moderate number of visitors, some several tens of thousands a year, except for the Boboli Gardens (8), already inscribed on the World Heritage List (around 600,000 visitors). There are no particular issues related to tourism or its future growth.

There are no notable pollution issues affecting the sites.

There is a high seismic risk (level 2) in much of Tuscany, and almost all the sites in the nominated property are affected.

The sites are all in the Arno hydrological basin, but they are built on hill tops or hillsides, so they are not affected by the significant risk of flooding. Some of the gardens and terraces could however be affected by destructive run-off in the event of a large storm or tornado. Climate change could aggravate this risk.

ICOMOS considers that the main threats to the property are urban and periurban growth in the buffer zone and seismic risk.

## 5 Protection, conservation and management

### Boundaries of the nominated property and buffer zone

The 14 sites of the nominated property and their buffer zones are:

Villa / garden name	Site (ha)	Buffer zone (ha)
1. Villa di Cafaggiolo	2.35	649.56
2. V. Il Trebbio	1.60	650.31
3. V. Careggi	3.60	55.71
4. V. Medici Fiesole	2.11	44.88
5. V. Castello	8.33	289.31
6. V. di Poggio a Caiano	9.31	135.63
7. V. la Petraia	21.31	276.33
8. Boboli Gardens	40.00	132.00
9. V. di Cerreto Guidi	0.76	4.12
10. Palazzo di Seravezza	1.01	50.14
11. Parco di Pratolino	26.53	210.35
12. V. La Mágina	2.10	103.65
13. V. di Artimino	1.04	701.66
14. V. del Poggio Imperiale	5.35	235.43
Total	125.40	3558.53

There are 90 people living in site No 8; 10 in site No 4; and 1 in site No 2. No one lives in any of the other sites.

All the buffer zones are inhabited with numbers ranging from one to several hundred (Nos 1 to 4, Nos 9 to 13) or several thousand (Nos 5 No 8 and No 14), and a maximum of 5,500 (site No 6). The total number of people

living within the serial property and its buffer zones is slightly over 25,000.

ICOMOS considers that the boundaries of the nominated serial property and its buffer zones are adequate.

### Ownership

The various sites comprising the serial property are mainly owned by the State (sites Nos 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 14), the Region of Tuscany (site No 4), the Province of Florence (site No 11) or municipalities (sites Nos 10 and 12). Four come under private law and belong to companies (sites Nos 1 and 13) or to private owners (sites Nos 2 and 4).

### Protection

The serial property includes villas and gardens listed as national monuments. They are subject to Italian laws on the protection of monuments and landscapes. These are framework laws No 1089 and No 1497 of 1939 for the protection of properties considered as historic monuments or cultural sites of national importance. These laws were revised and updated under the Legislative Decree No 42 of 2004, which instituted the Cultural Properties and Landscapes Act, subsequently augmented by Decree No 63 of 2008.

These legislative texts are implemented under the Regional Orientation Plan of the Region of Tuscany, then within each municipality through approved structural plans. In accordance with Italian legislation, the tools for the legal protection of monuments and landscapes are incorporated into regional and municipal plans, notably within urban development plans.

In addition to the buffer zones, a series of listed or protected landscape zones has been instituted for all the sites, except two (Nos 9 and 10). In several cases, this landscape protection only concerns a privileged vista cone viewed from the site, whereas the others are urban or periurban areas or not protected by this regulation (sites Nos 1, 3, 6, 8 and 12). This corresponds to a specific and significant effort to protect the best preserved landscape cones.

The sites are subject to inspection and regular monitoring by the regional services of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities (Regional Superintendencies). The application of regional, provincial and municipal planning tools incorporates requirements for protection against urban and periurban development pressure to ensure compatibility with the conservation of the sites and their landscapes.

ICOMOS considers that the legal protection in place is adequate.

### Conservation

There is abundant architectural, literary and iconographic documentation concerning the various sites. It is often located at the actual sites, or in the region's libraries and municipal, provincial and Tuscany regional archives. The

sites have also been inventoried and documented in the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities' database of national monuments.

The Regional Orientation Plan of the Tuscany Region (PIT) provides the general framework and funding for conservation projects, and structural thematic plans, such as the Cultural Landscape Recognition Plan. The provincial plans (PTCP) define the "local territorial systems", which serve as tools both for research and documentation, and for the protection and conservation management of the sites and landscapes and their monitoring. It is within the framework of these various institutional plans and programmes, together with the municipal plans, that the conservation actions are implemented at the level of each site, and the public funding that is required is obtained.

The state of conservation of the nominated property's sites is considered good overall by the State Party, but varies considerably. After the period of Medici ownership, a variety of uses, at times long-standing, led to work which was often useful for safeguarding the buildings, but also to modifications that have affected the authenticity, as mentioned earlier. Most of the sites have undergone major maintenance or restoration work since 1945, work that has been stepped up since the 1970s, the quality of which has been uneven. Some sites were in part rehabilitated, and Villa di Poggio a Caiano (site No 6) was partially rebuilt after suffering war damage. Today, a good half of the sites of the serial nomination are in an adequate state of conservation; for the remainder, restoration of major components is underway or planned.

Conservation work is carried out under the responsibility of the regional services of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities (Superintendencies). This means conservation is performed homogeneously under strict adherence to the principles and methods of the Italian school of restoration.

Maintenance of each site is provided by the entity or institution responsible for its management when it is publicly owned, or by the site's owner or assignee when privately owned.

All work designed to conserve, consolidate or restore the monuments, villas and gardens must be presented for authorisation to the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities, or be directly managed by its services.

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ICOMOS considers that the property's conservation is adequately organised; however, its overall planning should be better highlighted in the Management Plan.

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## **Management**

Management structures and processes, including traditional management processes

The publicly owned sites are managed by the services or institutions in charge of their permanent use, within the

framework of a public service mission. The privately owned sites come under various types of management depending on the owner (company or private individual) and how they have been assigned.

The serial property's partners are, on the one hand, public bodies which cover the entire property: the Region of Tuscany and services of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities; and on the other hand the public bodies of the four provinces and ten municipalities concerned with the sites and their buffer zones; and lastly the private owners. General consultation exists between these various levels of management of the sites within the framework of the Region of Tuscany, and has long applied for the conservation of the property's various components through the involvement of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities' regional and provincial services and those of the Region of Tuscany.

This cooperation for standardised and agreed management was recently formalised in a deed signed by the various parties, the Memorandum of Understanding (February 2012). It has led to the creation of a Steering Committee for the serial property (May 2012). Starting with the fiscal year 2013, its funding is assured by the Region. It is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Management Plan, and coordinating the property's protection, promotion and communication. The Committee will be supported by a Technical Bureau and an Observatory for the property and its conservation. However, their actual implementation needs to be specified. The allocated personnel will be selected from various public reference bodies and the Region's former Working Group.

Policy framework: management plans and arrangements, including visitor management and presentation

The various plans will operate at complementary levels (province, region and municipality); they adhere to a hierarchy of coordination, which in particular governs project funding and the allocation of human resources. At the serial property's cross-management level, implementation of the plans for each of the serial components is grouped in the Management Plan.

The Regional Orientation Plan of the Tuscany Region (PIT) is the legal and administrative tool framing and directing the general regional policy including the protection, conservation and management requirements for the sites and cultural landscapes.

The four Regional Coordination Plans (PTCP) of the Florence, Prato, Pistoia and Lucca provinces define the general framework for conservation and management actions, and the sector plans to inform and harmonise the local plans.

The eleven Structural and Urban Development Regulation Plans of the municipalities concerned with the property implement at the local level the principles for the

protection and conservation of the environment and landscape values. Within these plans, the sites are defined as “sub-systems” for which resources and specific programmes (protection, maintenance and works, tourism management and promotion programmes, etc.) are allocated.

Additionally, the sites located in the municipality of Florence (Nos 3, 5, 7, 8 and 14) come under the municipality’s General Regulator Plan and (for No 8) the Management Plan for the Historic Centre of Florence within the context of its inscription on the World Heritage List (Property No 174, 1982).

The Medici Villas and Gardens Management Plan (2011) groups together and presents the various levels of plans examined above. It focuses on thematic groupings: protection and conservation; enhancement and socio-economic environment; promotion, training and communication plan; and monitoring plan.

Risk preparation and prevention is included in the provincial plans (PTCP), notably with regard to hydrogeological protection, rural development management and the impact of urban growth.

The property’s management plan implies that the property has qualified personnel for its management and conservation, at its various regional levels, but without providing any details.

Most conservation and maintenance actions under way or planned within the short term have funding in place.

Each site’s practical (hotels, restaurants, car parks, etc.) and cultural (information centres, museums, etc.) visitor facilities can easily cope with an increase in current numbers. Sufficient interpretation and communication facilities exist, although they may benefit from improvement in some cases. Various enhancement and promotion programmes for the property are being implemented.

#### Involvement of the local communities

The local communities are mainly involved through political representation by their elected officials at various levels: municipal, provincial and Region of Tuscany.

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ICOMOS considers that an adequate individual management system is in place at each of the sites, together with technical coordination for conservation actions, but that operational confirmation is needed for the recently instituted cross-site management system, the Steering Committee and its two bodies, the Technical Bureau and the Observatory, and specifying the human and material resources available. ICOMOS considers that the Management Plan provided is more of a compilation of the existing situation regarding protection, conservation and enhancement of each of the sites than an effective management plan compiled by a coordination body for the entire serial property. A detailed list of the human

resources, personnel and training requirements should also be provided.

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## 6 Monitoring

A series of nine key indicators has been defined for the property’s periodic annual monitoring: 1) natural risks, 2) statistical monitoring of new construction and restoration work, 3) pollution, 4) level of conservation of the Medici villas, 5) restoration and/or maintenance work on the Medici villas, 6) phytosanitary state of the Medici parks and gardens, 7) phytosanitary actions and garden maintenance, 8) tourist flows and 9) public works.

Depending on the content, monitoring operations will be carried out by the Regional Department for Heritage and Landscape, the region’s *ad hoc* technical services, or by municipal services. They will be coordinated by the Regional Head Architect for Cultural Heritage. No monitoring of the property taken as a whole has been performed as of yet.

ICOMOS considers that at present the proposal made only concerns the bulk of the monitoring and that it is necessary to build on the 9 principal indicators by creating a series of more precise secondary indicators, with their frequency reviewed in some cases. The lack of any monitoring coordination by a real transversal inspection body able to make executive decisions is unfortunately evident at various points in the table: the monitoring of building and other works in the buffer zones seems merely to be a collation of municipal data; the notion of “appropriate tourism services” to be monitored remains somewhat vague for the moment.

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ICOMOS considers that the monitoring policy needs to be deepened with precise secondary indicators and coordinated and analysed by an overarching body with significant inspection and regulatory powers.

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## 7 Conclusions

ICOMOS recognises the Outstanding Universal Value of the Medici villas and gardens as testimony to the creation of new aristocratic life styles in the country by the Medici in Tuscany. They illustrate the evolution of the relationship between Man and Nature during the periods of Humanism and the Renaissance, in Italy and then in Europe. The value and cultural wealth of this ensemble and its historic importance are beyond doubt. It is one of the major models of the art of living and of the foundation of new characteristic aesthetic forms leading to European culture in the Modern Era.

## 8 Recommendations

### Recommendations with respect to inscription

ICOMOS recommends that the Medici Villas and Gardens, Italy, be inscribed on the World Heritage List as a cultural landscape on the basis of **criteria (ii), (iv) and (vi)**.

### Recommended Statement of Outstanding Universal Value

#### Brief synthesis

The economic, financial and political fortunes of the Medici were behind extensive patronage that had a decisive effect on the cultural and artistic history of modern Europe. Among the resulting architectural and aesthetic forms, the Medici villas in deep harmony with their gardens and rural environment are among the most original of the Italian Renaissance. The nominated property is a selection of twelve complete villas with their gardens and two additional pleasure gardens spread across the Tuscan countryside and near to Florence. The Medici villa and its gardens embody an ideal of the princely residence in the country where it was possible to live in harmony with nature, and dedicate as much to leisure pastimes as to the arts and knowledge.

**Criterion (ii):** The Medici villas and gardens in Tuscany are testimony to a synthesis of the aristocratic rural residence, at the end of the Middle Ages, which made material a series of new political, economic and aesthetic ambitions. Villas and gardens formed models that spread widely throughout Italy during the Renaissance and then to the whole of modern Europe.

**Criterion (iv):** The Medici baronial residences provide eminent examples of the rural aristocratic villa dedicated to leisure, the arts and knowledge. Over a period spanning almost three centuries, the Medici developed many innovative architectural and decorative forms. The ensemble is testimony to the technical and aesthetic organisation of the gardens in association with their rural environment, giving rise to a landscape taste specific to Humanism and the Renaissance.

**Criterion (vi):** The villas and gardens, together with the Tuscan landscapes of which they are a part, made an early and decisive contribution to the birth of a new aesthetic and art of living. They are testimony to exceptional cultural and artistic patronage developed by the Medici. They form a series of key locations for the emergence of the ideals and tastes of the Italian Renaissance followed by their diffusion throughout Europe.

#### Integrity

Despite some reservations due to the changes made to certain of the sites and their environment, at times affected by changes in use and modern development, the serial nomination forms an ensemble with sufficient integrity to testify in a credible and satisfactory manner to

its Outstanding Universal Value. The serial composition has been fully justified. A significant effort to preserve the characteristic landscapes associated with the sites, and still surviving today, has been announced by the State Party.

#### Authenticity

The components of the sites testifying to the preservation of the authenticity of the architectural forms, the preservation of decorative styles and materials, the composition of the gardens, usage of the places respectful of the Medici's achievements and ideals, and the preservation of the main components of the landscapes largely offset the reservations raised during the critical examination of each of the sites that make up the serial property. For those attributes whose authenticity has suffered, many are the subject of a restoration or usage reassignment programme, notably as museums or cultural venues.

#### Management and protection requirements

The serial property includes villas and gardens listed as national monuments. They are subject to Italian laws on the protection of historic monuments or as cultural sites of national value. These legislative texts are implemented under the Regional Orientation Plan of the Region of Tuscany, then within each municipality through approved structural plans. In addition to the buffer zones, a series of listed or protected landscape zones has been instituted for all the sites, except two (Nos 9 and 10).

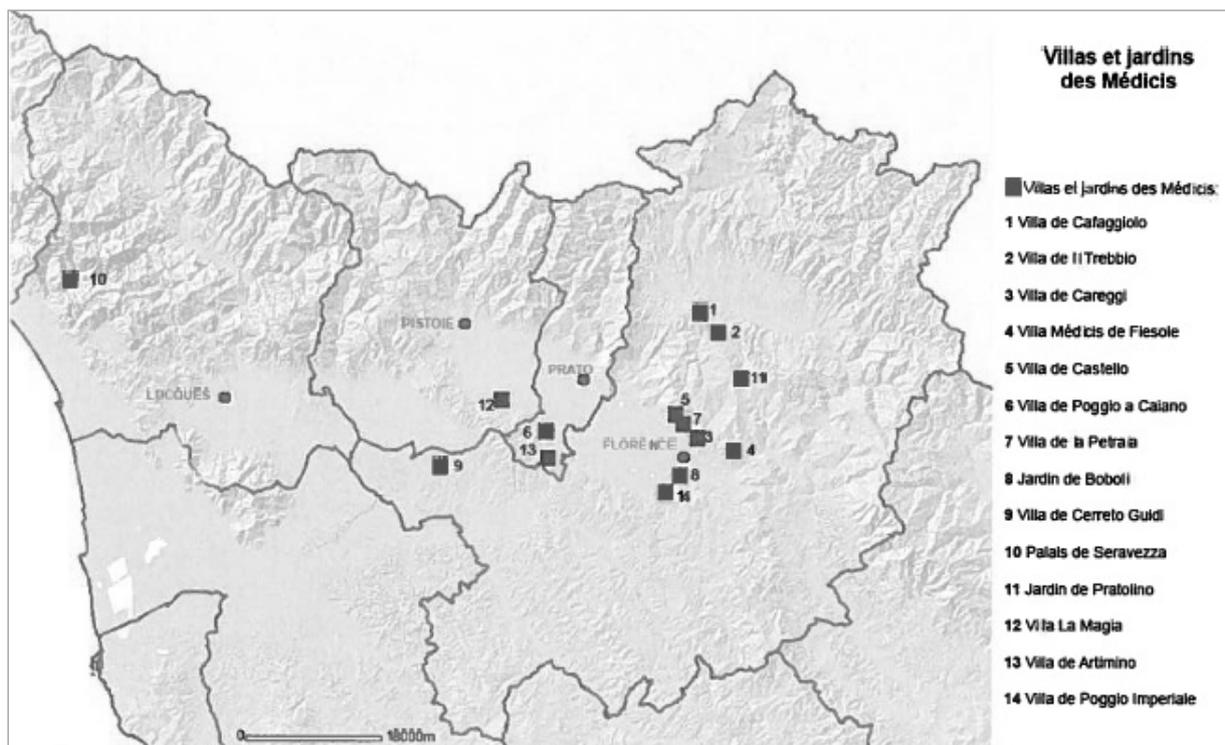
An adequate individual management system is in place at each of the sites, together with technical coordination for conservation actions, under the aegis of the Region of Tuscany and the Ministry for Cultural Heritage and Activities. This cooperation for standardised and agreed management was recently extended and formalised in the Memorandum of Understanding, a deed shared by the property's various partners (Ministry, Region, 4 provinces and 10 municipalities). It has led to the creation of a Steering Committee for the serial property that is scheduled to begin operation starting in fiscal year 2013. It is responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Management Plan, and coordinating the property's protection, promotion and communication. The Committee will be supported by a Technical Bureau and an Observatory for the property and its conservation. However, their actual implementation needs to be specified. Furthermore, while the conservation of each of the sites is adequately organised, its overall planning should be better highlighted in the Management Plan.

#### Additional recommendations

ICOMOS recommends that the State Party give consideration to the following:

- Confirming the actual operation of the Steering Committee's transversal management system and its two bodies: the Technical Bureau and the Observatory, detailing the human and material resources available to them;

- Establishing precise secondary monitoring indicators; coordinate and analyse the property's monitoring by the transversal management entity;
- Establishing an updated Management Plan, including implementation dates, and in particular add a conservation schedule for the property's constituent components;
- As part of the management plan, compiling a table of the available and necessary human resources, levels of qualification and training requirements.



Map showing the location of the nominated properties



Villa del Trebbio, general view



Villa Medici in Fiesole, general view



Villa di Poggio a Caiano, main façade



Villa del Poggio Imperiale, main façade



Villa di Artimino, loggia



Boboli Gardens, general view