Foreword

The conference Villas around the Urbs: Interaction with landscape and environment was given in celebration of the 25th anniversary of the Famiglia Rausing Foundation and of the support it has given to Swedish research projects within the field of the humanities in Italy. It was a great pleasure to see the President of the Board, Birgit Rausing, and all its members during this conference.

The Fondazione Famiglia Rausing was established in 1979 by the late Ruben Rausing, who was the founder of the industries Åkerlund & Rausing, and Tetra Pak. The former President of the Board, the late Gad Rausing, in addition to being an industrialist had a PhD in archaeology and he followed the projects of the Institute with keen interest. When I took over as the secretary of the Foundation in 2001, Gad was no longer among us and his wife Birgit Rausing was the newly elected president of the board. We dedicate this volume to the memory of Gad Rausing, to honor his initiatives, and sincerely hope it will measure up to his intentions.

The largest part of the financial contributions during these 25 years, has been dedicated to archaeology, which always has been and still is one of the principal activities of the Institute and around which the library was built up originally. The archaeological projects which have received grants are individual projects as well as larger ones involving many scholars and students. When the excavation campaigns of the prehistoric and Etruscan sites at Ficana, Luni sul Mignone, San Giovenale and Acquarossa were finished as field campaigns, the time-consuming work of processing the material stored at the Institute or in Viterbo began. The Foundation has given substantial financial support in supporting this less glorious phase through the years, but which has been extremely important for the continuation and completion of these projects.

The aim of the Foundation to support research within all fields of humanities has contributed to opening up the Institute to a larger range of disciplines than would have been possible otherwise. Art history is of tradition strongly represented in our activities, as are philology and history. Several scholars have conducted individual projects which involved studies of the collections of Latin manuscripts in the Vatican Library concerning the Swedish Saint Birgitta, and the Swedish Queen Christina, who abdicated and moved to Rome. Thanks to support from Fondazione Famiglia Rausing, it has also been possible to introduce disciplines such as modern Italian literature, cultural anthropology and contemporary history.

Financial support from the Foundation has also been very important during the initial phase of larger projects and commitments. To start a new project is a critical phase when scientific aims have to be formulated, theoretical frameworks and methods discussed and developed. The support given to the newly initiated interdisciplinary research project on Via Tiburtina should be mentioned as an example. This made it possible to formulate a larger project and to present this application to the Swedish Research Council (Vetenskapsrådet), which in 2005 decided to give its sponsorship.

We found it appropriate to devote this seminar to the Roman villas around the Urbs in view of the rapid development in archaeological investigation in this area. The decision of the Foundation to support the archaeological field-work of the joint Nordic mission working at the imperial villa at Nemi, and the Swedish garden project at the Villa of Livia at Prima Porta made the villa theme most appropriate for this celebration. Results from both these projects are presented in this volume.

Seminars and conferences are of extreme importance in the ongoing academic discourse and the principal arena for exchanging ideas and research results in a world of rapid change. In order to speed up publication but also to reach a vaster audience than is possible with a traditional, printed edition we decided to publish the conference acta in the newly created on-line series Projects and Seminars, intended to be a forum for debate and communication by publishing conferences, preliminary reports and presentations of research in progress. However, in addition to the net-edition, a printed version will also be published in a limited number of copies. This strategy fits well with the actual trend in the academic communities as a whole, where the number of on-line publications is growing everyday. I would like to thank Allan and Cecilia Klynne for their editorial work, Astrid Capoferro who proofread and corrected the whole manuscript and Stefania Renzetti, responsible for the web production.

Archaeological research is not a lonely business; it usually involves collaboration with colleagues, groups of students and scholars from inter-related disciplines. Swedish scholars working in Italy therefore have close contacts with Italian and foreign scholars and with the local authorities. It is our hope that this conference mirrors this stimulating side of academic work and I take the opportunity to thank especially all collaborators of the Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali for their constant and generous cooperation.

To conclude, I wish to express my deep thanks to the Fondazione Famiglia Rausing on behalf of the Institute for this profitable collaboration during these past years, hoping that the future will be equally rewarding.

Rome, September 2005

Barbro Santillo Frizell
Professor, Director of the Swedish Institute of Classical Studies in Rome