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## Landscapes

Issue 31 – Winter 1994



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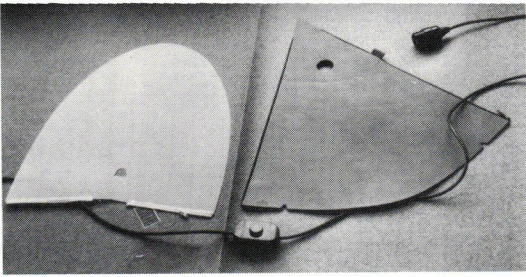
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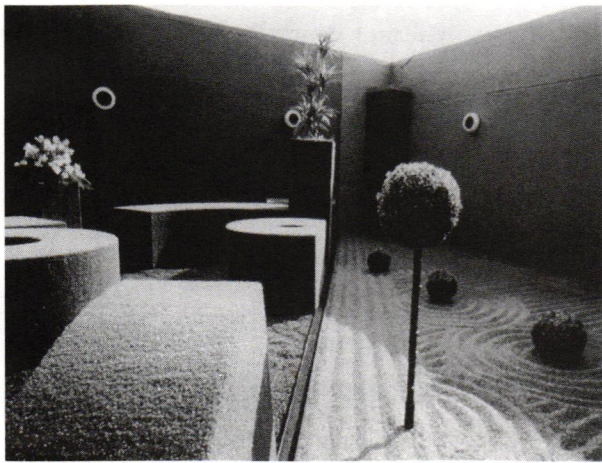
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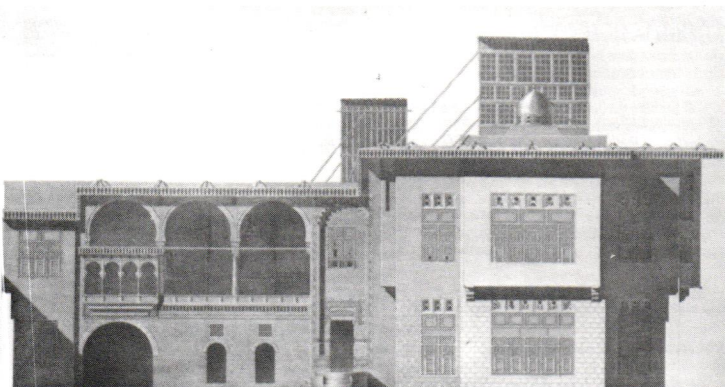
***Gardens and the Picturesque***



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***Writing the History of  
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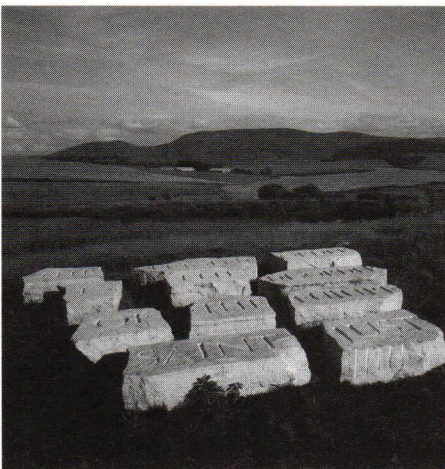
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## Landscapegoat

Landscape, as J. B. Jackson often reminded his students, is more about the mind that frames a view than it is about topographic and natural elements. There is the art of designing the landscapes, the practice of making art out of landscape, and the art of appreciating the landscape. Already these different modes of perception imply many potentially conflicting or competing uses of a single realm of meaning. An even greater challenge comes from the recent position of historians of vernacular environments, such as Dell Upton, who use the notion of landscape to signify the totality of a place as the result of multiple authors and interpretations. While professional landscape designers may not perceive their activities to be more controversial than making proper plant choices, there is in fact a bristling cultural agon to determine where the frame for landscapes is located.

Landscapes, either through design or through the act of preservation, have become the supreme form of sacrifice for the 20th century. The design of a landscape, from the backyard to the national park, is a means to atone for complicity in the dissipation of the larger environment. Land that has real estate value, or that was once engaged in the production



"The Present Order Is the Disorder of the Future," Stonypath, Scotland; Ian Hamilton Findlay, 1983. (From *Ian Hamilton Findlay: A Visual Primer*.)

of surplus, is now framed out of these economies for recreational uses, offered as a sacrifice for the sins of development. Designers and politicians establish the redeeming frame, police and gardeners maintain it, and organisms creep in and out of it. Each artificially engineered remnant of nature is an act of penance to relieve the suffering of collective guilt. At the base of the tallest corporate towers in Dallas, there are marvelous fountains that create a sense of lustration at the points of entry. Along the strife-ridden edges of New York's Houston Street, small gardens have been reclaimed from vacant lots and fenced off like pilgrim shrines. In Barcelona, the recent progress of urban renewal has been accompanied by aggressive paving and sculptural interventions that monumentalize the martyrial scars of mechanical civilization. Every frame for a landscape demarcates a ritual territory for deliverance.

Despite the permanent appearance that the elements of a landscape can assume, the growth of living things, the animation of the wind, the fluidity of precipitation, the extremes of temperature, and the intrusion of mobile creatures, such as humans, will always disturb its equilibrium. All landscapes *desire* to revert to a state of homeostasis, but the framed landscape is an illusion, requiring concerted acts of vigil, such as watering, draining, pruning, fertilizing, policing. A lawn that isn't cut goes to seed, a hedge that isn't pruned becomes a bush, pavements crack, fountains clog, walls are written and pissed on. Without maintenance, the frame is eroded and the act of sacrifice is annulled. While the frames of landscape are challenged, and the belief of their ritual is subject to doubt, landscapes are perpetually blurring their own frames.

*Richard Ingersoll*

### Design Book Review 31

Winter 1994

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*Front cover:* Vall d'Hebron, Barcelona, 1992; master plan by Eduard Bru; pictured here is the competition facilities for the archery range, by Enric Miralles and Carme Pinós. (From *Quaderns de Arquitectura* 193.)

*Back cover:* "Small Gardens in the City," Garrett Eckbo; 1937. (From *Modern Landscape Architecture*.) Botanical plans. (From *The Poetics of Gardens*.)

## Letters to the Editors

**Design Book Review** (ISSN 0737-5344) is published quarterly (winter, spring, summer, and fall) by The MIT Press, Cambridge, MA 02142 for the editors of *Design Book Review*, 1418 Spring Way, Berkeley, CA 94708. Subscriptions and address changes should be addressed to MIT Press Journals, 55 Hayward Street, Cambridge, MA 02142; (617)253-2889; E-mail: journals-orders@mit.edu. Subscription rates are: Individuals \$34.00, Institutions \$78.00, Students /Retired \$20.00. Outside U.S. add \$14.00 for postage and handling. Canadians add additional 7% GST. Current issues are \$9.00. Back issues are: Individuals \$14.00, Institutions \$28.00. Outside U.S. add \$5.00 per issue for postage and handling. Canadians add additional 7% GST. To be honored free, claims for missing issues must be made immediately upon receipt of the published issue. Prices subject to change without notice. Copyright © 1994 by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Second-class postage paid at Boston, MA, and additional mailing of offices. Postmaster: send address changes to *Design Book Review*, MIT Press, 55 Hayward Street, Cambridge, MA 02142.

Direct advertising and mailing list inquiries to: Marketing Manager, MIT Press Journals, 55 Hayward Street, Cambridge, MA 02142; (617)253-2866; E-mail: journals-info@mit.edu. Books for review and editorial correspondence should be sent to *Design Book Review*, 1418 Spring Way, Berkeley, CA 94708.

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*Design Book Review* is abstracted or indexed in *ARTbibliographies Modern*, *Avery Index to Architectural Periodicals*, *Bibliography of the History of Art*, *Book Review Index*, and *Sociological Abstracts*. *Design Book Review* is available on microfilm from University Microfilms, 300 No. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106.

*Design Book Review* is distributed in the U.S. by B. DeBoer, Inc. 113 E. Centre Street, Nutley, NJ 07110; Fine Print Dist., 6448 Highway 290 East, Austin, TX 78723-1038, (512)452-8709; Ingram, 1226 Heil Quaker Boulevard, LaVergne, TN 37086, (800)627-6247; and Ubiquity, 607 Degraw Street, Brooklyn, NY 11217, (718) 875-5491.

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TO THE EDITORS:

After reading Riitta Nikula's review "Temptations of Nordic Architecture," in *Design Book Review* 27, a definite image came to my mind: a dark room, the low sound of small electric motors, a wall partially lit by two images, and someone standing in the dark, not too close to the light, desperately trying to reduce the diverse to the identical. Anyone who has been bored to a sleepy stupor in an art history class is familiar with this image and those lessons in superficial resemblance. A colleague of mine has even referred to such lessons as spontaneous lobotomies.

In her fine book, *Magritte*, Suzi Gablik writes that, according to the artist, "almost everybody likes a resemblance, even when there is none." In that regard I must thank Dr. Nikula for comparing my book, *The New Finnish Architecture*, with Marja-Riitta Norri's excellent catalog that followed the exhibit, *An Architectural Present—7 Approaches*, but say no thanks and note that similarity is not equivalent to identity.

Vague resemblance may constitute identity in the mind of a particular observer, but in reality what appears to be "virtually the same" to the indiscriminate eye can, in fact, develop independently, be quite different, and have its own distinct meaning.

Dr. Nikula believes that the subject matter of my book orbits around intellectual trends, a search for the "truth" and Finnishness. Rather, the book focuses on the continuity of certain aspects of Western culture as they have been interpreted in Finland, the way in which artistic and ethical forces such as the cultivation of simplicity have shaped not only the past and the present, but the future of Finnish architecture, and, perhaps most significantly, the persistence of a degree of autonomy in the art of build-

ing that calls into question the everyday world.

*The New Finnish Architecture* does not present Finnish architecture as "unique," as Dr. Nikula implies, but as normal and straightforward developments within the tradition of modernism. Surely there is nothing unique in formal clarity, vernacular tradition, and an artistic concern with the phenomena of our physical environment, although in the circumstances of our time these aspects of the art of building seem to be neglected and almost forgotten.

Scott Poole  
Virginia Polytechnic  
Institute and State University  
Blacksburg, Virginia

RIITTA NIKULA RESPONDS:

*Scott Poole still does not answer the only question I ever asked him: why did he not mention the book An Architectural Present—7 Approaches (published in 1990) in his book (published in 1992)—not even a single footnote?*

Riitta Nikula  
Helsinki, Finland

JAMES CORNER AND  
RUTH CSERR

## Nature Pictorialized: “The View” in Landscape Architecture

Gina Crandell

Landscape is not given. It is not of nature and it does not exist without human effort and agency. Instead, landscape—and the view of nature it embodies—is a construct, a representation made from images, language, and built works. These schemata, at once rhetorical and geographical, inform our perception of the world and affect how we act within it. Pictures in particular have historically proven to be some of the most powerful agents in the construction of landscape and the aesthetic appreciation of nature.

On the cover of Gina Crandell’s book, *Nature Pictorialized: “The View” in Landscape History*, is a reproduction of René Magritte’s painting *The Door to Freedom*, which depicts a conception of landscape as a framed view or picture. The image drawn upon the shards of the shattered window represents the reality behind it. With the splintering of the image, the reality revealed is but itself a view, a constructed composition that is far from natural. This view is held not only within the window frame, but also by the frame of the painting. This work describes the almost inseparable relationship between pictures and reality, highlighting the way in which paintings are simultaneously instructed by and constructive of particular views of land and nature. The fact that this relationship is far from innocent underlies Crandell’s research.

The author raises this question of innocence in the opening pages of her book, where she describes the paradox

inherent in the way pictures enable us to actually “see” the world: on one hand, pictures can afford new insight, appreciation, and understanding; on the other hand, they can alienate us from nature, making us view it as something outside of ourselves, as an object of contemplation.

Drawing from Vincent Scully’s *The Earth, the Temple, and the Gods* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), Crandell describes a time when the land was unmediated by pictures. She speculates that, for the ancient Greeks, there was no miniaturization or representation of the land; instead, they simply inhabited it, and the siting of their buildings had more to do with topography than with optical or pictorial relationships. Soon thereafter, however, the recording and depicting of land in pictures led to a mode of garden- and city-making that was increasingly scenographic at the expense of fully haptic and kinesthetic experience.

This separation of spectator and spectacle shapes Crandell’s survey of pictures, and distinguishes it from similar works, such as Kenneth Clark’s *Landscape into Art* (New York: Harper &



*The Door to Freedom*, René Magritte, 1937. (From *Nature Pictorialized*.)

Rowe, 1984). In “Pictorial Developments,” the first part of Crandell’s book, she describes the changing position of the spectator from Greek to modern times using a series of themes such as “confronting,” “staging,” “elevating,” and “bewildering.” The second part, “Picturesque Vision,” outlines the impact of pastoral and idyllic paintings (especially those of Claude Lorraine and Salvator Rosa) on the English landscape garden movement of the 18th century, wherein landowners modified the plantings and topography of their estates to resemble scenes depicted in these much-valued paintings. In the book’s third and final section, “Pictorialization Naturalized,” Crandell argues forcefully that the assumed “natural” aesthetic of the pastoral (which still pervades ideas about what parks and suburbs should look like) is no more natural than any other constructed landscape. She writes, “It is one of the ironies of the pastoral ideal that even though it reflects a deeply anti-urban sentiment, it has always been primarily an urban phenomenon.”

The apparent goal of *Nature Pictorialized* is to alert landscape architecture students and practitioners to these important ideas about pictures (and especially the aesthetic of the pastoral). The author states, “Undeniably, the landscape itself has become the repository of pictorial conventions and landscape architecture the perpetuator of the painterly vision.” Crandell’s argument is based on the development of a certain type of view in Western culture, one that is learned socially and limited in its capacity to see beyond itself. This blinkering of vision by convention and habit is described beautifully by Norman Bryson in an essay entitled “The Gaze in the Expanded Field,” from *Vision and Visuality*, edited by Hal Foster (Seattle: Bay Press, 1988):

For human beings collectively to orchestrate their visual experience together it is required that each submit his or her retinal experience to the

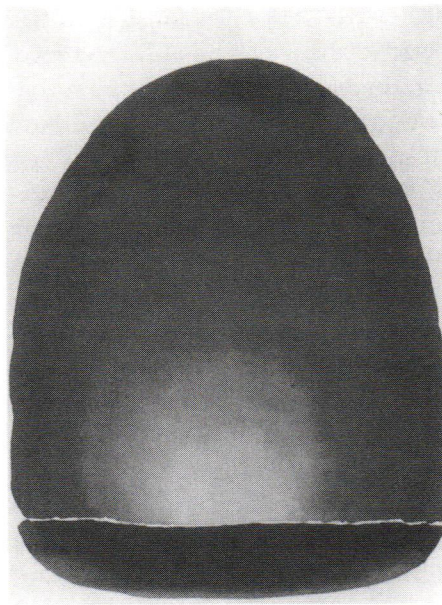


socially agreed description(s) of an intelligible world. Vision is socialized, and thereafter deviation from this social construction of visual reality can be measured and named, variously, as hallucination, misrecognition, or “visual disturbance.” Between the subject and the world is inserted the entire sum of discourses which make up visibility, that cultural construct, and make visibility different from vision, the notion of unmediated visual experience. Between retina and world is inserted a screen of signs, a screen consisting of all the multiple discourses on vision built into the social arena.

Thus vision, as a unique experience unmediated by the conventions of visibility, exists only to the same degree that speech can exist unmediated by the shared, learned cultural construct of language. Speaking and seeing both rely on the social “screen” that allows experience to be communicated from one person to another. Writes Bryson:

This screen *casts a shadow*: sometimes Lacan calls it a scotoma, sometimes a stain. For when we look through the screen, what we see is caught up in a network that comes to us from the outside: mobile tesserae of signification, a mosaic that moves. This network is greater than its individual agents or operators. When I learn to speak, I am inserted into systems of discourse that were there before I was, and will remain after I am gone. Similarly, when I learn to see socially, that is, when I begin to articulate my retinal experience with the codes of recognition that come to me from my social milieu(s), I am inserted into systems of visual discourse that saw the world before I did, and will go on seeing after I see no longer. The screen casts a shadow of *death*.

It comes as no surprise, then, that present-day notions of what is most “natural” in the landscape have been handed down, at least partially, through the traditional ways in which we have viewed the landscape in painting and pictures.



*Light Coming on the Plains III*, Georgia O'Keeffe, 1917. (From *Nature Pictorialized*.)

Undoubtedly, images mediate our experience and understanding of the world around us, and affect the way we operate in it. Paintings and pictures—which would include cinematic and other such manufactured imagery—are among the many lenses that filter our primary visual experiences. However, this mediatory relationship, that of the “screen,” bears further examination, particularly the way it sets up distance, and ultimately alienation, between the viewer and the object of the view. Crandell addresses this subject specifically in the case where “pictures still inspire tourists to travel long distances.” In the case of the tourist, the image of the landscape viewed before the real thing affects how the visitor views the place itself. The pictures condition a particular way of seeing that detaches the viewer from the object, as spectators toward a spectacle. The relationship between tourist and place is quite unlike that of a resident, or someone for whom the pictorial aspects of a place are unimportant relative to the day-to-day activities of actually living there. Denis Cosgrove touches upon this point in *Social Formation and the Symbolic Landscape* (Totowa: Barnes &

Noble, 1984), in which he writes:

The visible forms and their harmonious integration to the eye may indeed be a constituent part of people's relationship with the surroundings of their daily lives, but such considerations are subservient to other aspects of a working life with family and community. The composition of their landscape is much more integrated and inclusive with the diurnal course of life's events—with birth, death, festival, tragedy—all the occurrences that lock together human time and place. For the insider there is no clear separation of self from scene, subject from object.

As long as landscape is construed as an object, view, or picture, the subject who is viewing it remains experientially and existentially outside of it, as if at a distance, safe from the ravages and intrusions of the natural, living world. It is this socially perpetuated, purely visual relationship to landscape that prohibits a more meaningful, non-object-oriented understanding of the world around us. When landscape exists as an object, separate and distant from human life, it remains forever a scene or a snapshot, denying the possibility of deeper and more meaningful inhabitation. Further, when the landscape is objectified as something that is merely viewed, by extension, it is exploited, classified simplistically as a natural or visual “resource.” Visual resources are precisely those scenic views that tourists expect to see. Although we tend to find the idea of the exploitation of the land for natural resources more heinous than its exploitation as a visual resource, the relationship between humans, land, and nature is the same in both cases: that of the viewer who objectifies the viewed.

The conventions behind the widespread belief that nature is a picture, an object, underlie a moral impulse, which Crandell describes: “Desperately, with the best of intentions but finally hopelessly, landscape architects wish to restore nature to this ‘natural’ state. We

seem to believe that such gestures are evidence of stewardship and, most of all, that we are helping to restore nature to that pretty appearance she had before man came along." Thus, landscape architects, as stewards or caretakers who wish to care for the land by protecting or restoring its natural appearance, relate to the land no differently in ethical terms than those who see the land as a quarry of natural resources.

Clearly, the legacy of the pictorial view of landscape and nature has had a profound effect on the planning, design, and production of landscapes during the 20th century. Pictures are both the lens through which we receive the world, and the means through which designers construct ideas and subsequently construct environments. Thus, the making of drawings and the type of drawings employed become critical to challenging the notion of landscape as a view or as an objectified scene. The perspective drawing, for example, is a pictorial convention widely used in contemporary design practice, presenting the landscape as a composed and static scene, one that is received frontally and from a singular point of view. In continuing to privilege this type of representation (in both generative and communicative ways), landscape architects fail to address the more visceral, instinctual, and unpredictable ways of experiencing of the natural world. Within the safety of the scenic image, the tension and uncertainty of humans caught in the flow and flux of natural time is bypassed.

Crandell's book asks that landscape architects question and challenge the assumptions, vocabularies, and conventions upon which much of the practice of their discipline is based. An understanding of the impact pictures have had on our perception of landscape offers the opportunity to move away from the static, scenic, and sentimental conceptions of nature that so encrust creativity in landscape architectural design today. In the concluding pages of her book, Cran-

dell offers a few clues for how to free ourselves from conventional ways of seeing, through examples drawn from contemporary environmental and land artists. Key to the success of these works is their acknowledgment of the picture-plane itself as a privileged site, wherein there are no allusions to another reality. Instead, the reality is the self-containment and autonomy of the artwork. Furthermore, embedded in such works are traces that plant doubt and uncertainty, thereby challenging the spectator to accept the ambiguities of the world shown. Once inside, frontality and distance are diminished as the inhabitant must chart a course of understanding that can only be one interpretation amongst others. Crandell observes, "Such doubt is necessary to question the conventions and explode the scenic habits that had for more than a millennium led to the pictorialization of nature."

The work of contemporary environmental artists is most useful to landscape architects in the way it defies the estrangement of inhabitants and land. Beyond merely questioning the painterly tradition, it is necessary to change the subject/object dichotomy that exists throughout Western culture. Indeed, Crandell pays insufficient attention to the larger cultural framework that allows for the perpetuation of an objectified world-view, which underlies the nature/culture division. She neglects to examine the difficulty of integrating the project of art into the life and spirit of the cultural imagination at large. A revisioning of pictures and of visuality will not alone cure the ills of our complex age, but, if history is any measure, it may prove to be a fertile place to begin.

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NATURE PICTORIALIZED: "THE VIEW" IN LANDSCAPE HISTORY, Gina Crandell, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993, 196 pp., illus., \$35.00.

JOHN DIXON HUNT

## **The Symbolism of Habitat: An Interpretation of Landscape in the Arts**

*Jay Appleton*

## **The Poetics of Gardens**

*Charles W. Moore,  
William J. Mitchell, and  
William Turnbull, Jr.*

The relationship of design to meaning (as well as the meanings and varieties of meaning in design) are not themes readily addressed these days by the profession of landscape architecture. Formal concerns sometimes struggle to raise themselves above the problematics of site work, but conceptual or theoretical interests rarely extend beyond matters of style; a vocabulary of "formal" and "informal," or the automatic opposition of "regular" to "natural" gardening, marks the extent of most discussion and, at the same time, its paralysis. The exigencies and contingencies of landscape architectural practice postpone or marginalize (necessarily, it is argued) any consideration of principles; when these are aired in design journals, if at all, they are likely to be limited by consideration of one specific site and, by their very nature, cannot take on a wider discourse. So it is an important occasion when conceptual and theoretical work of some scope appears, such as the publication of the two books reviewed here, thus allowing for adequate discussion.

I remember welcoming the first appearance of Jay Appleton's ideas on how humans respond to landscape. His *The Experience of Landscape* (1975; reprint, Hull: Hull University Press, 1986) seemed to offer a theoretical

structure for analyzing our experience of landscape in all its forms—real, painted, designed, even verbally described. He continued to spread his ideas on “habitat theory” and “prospect-refuge theory” in *Landscape in the Arts and the Sciences* (Hull: Hull University Press, 1980), in briefer format in “Prospects and Refuges Re-visited” in *The Landscape Journal* (vol. 3 [Fall 1984]: 91–103) and, unexpectedly for a professor of geography, in verse in *The Poetry of Habitat* (Hull: Hull University Press, 1978). Along the way he fine-tuned his theories, but basically they remain the same, and they appear yet again in *The Symbolism of Habitat*, which is the text of his Jessie and John Danz Lectures at the University of Washington in 1988.

I must confess—difficult though it is to write concerning a friend and colleague whose work once seemed so exciting—that Appleton’s theories now strike me as far less useful. I was always slightly uneasy that Appleton’s prospect-refuge theory set the level of landscape experience too low. Arguing from the behavior of animals, he saw human response to territory as also partaking of the same instincts of survival, dominance (over prey), and need for security. I remember that, when challenged, Appleton always insisted that this biological level was precisely that: a level or essential basis upon which other experiences of landscape were formed and could be analyzed.

Though his new book seems to promise an extension of his theory, it merely digs in on that same level. He reviews in passing various poems and paintings, all illustrated, with some fairly simple advice on what symbolism means, only to reiterate that “artists [are] constrained, whether they realize it or not, by the laws of the biological sciences” and that therefore “we ought to widen the field of aesthetic enquiry to comprehend those laws also.” I have no problem with the notion that artists represent things of which they are unconscious,

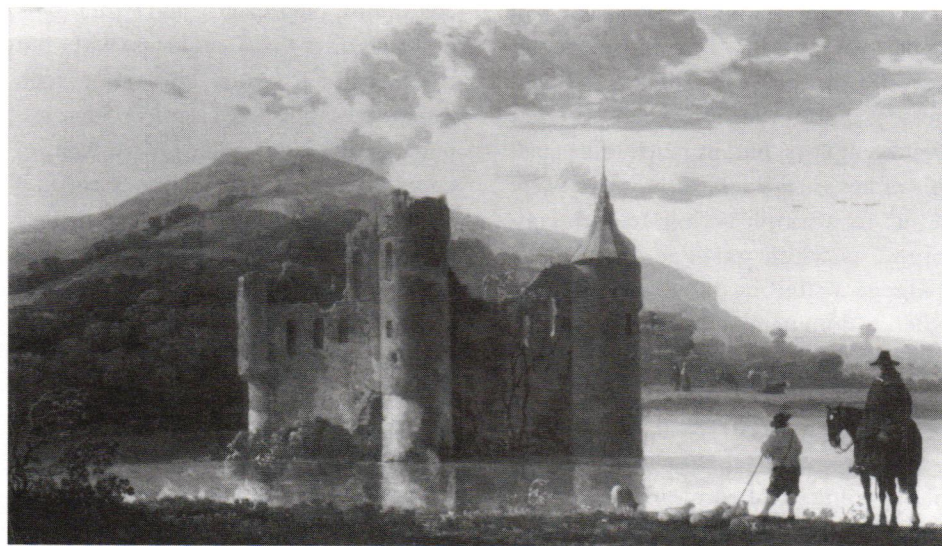
but I am increasingly convinced that invoking the biological experience does not “widen” our appreciation for the artworks.

No one would argue that “*Homo sapiens* have no vestigial signs of behavior patterns shared by other creatures,” simply because they prefer to focus on the transformations in human experience of landscape brought about by social, cultural, economic, or personal factors. Yet Appleton seems to interpret any concern with these other factors as a denial of his claims about the “origins of our responses to landscape” (my emphasis). To study these origins, Appleton is willing, in short, to neglect “the vastly greater complexity and potential of the human brain” and, one could add, of human society. That is an author’s privilege, but I cannot see that this has advanced our study of the role that landscape plays in human affairs. Indeed, *The Symbolism of Habitat* rehearses his now-familiar terms so inertly that their analytical thrust has all but dispersed, and is not helped by the relaxed and even simple style of address that clearly remains from the original lectures. Readers who want to understand Appleton’s ideas at their most rigorous should return to

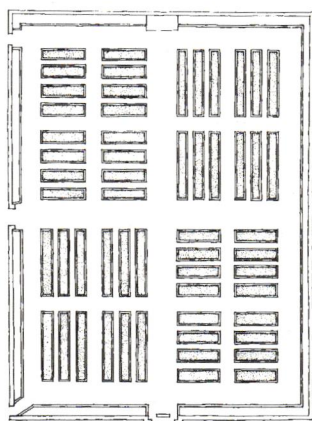
### *The Experience of Landscape.*

Animal survival behavior, however basic a criterion for understanding the human experience of landscape, does not address the range, richness, and complexity of such experiences, though we are still far from understanding them. It is useful to identify the prospect-refuge-hazard themes in John Clare’s poetry or James Barry’s paintings, but we also need to see how they work in conjunction with other cultural meanings. This is where Charles Moore, William Mitchell, and William Turnbull, the authors of *The Poetics of Gardens*, intervene. Though they do not refer directly to Appleton’s ideas, their analyses often seem to reach toward his by their consideration of some basic motives, even instincts, in design.

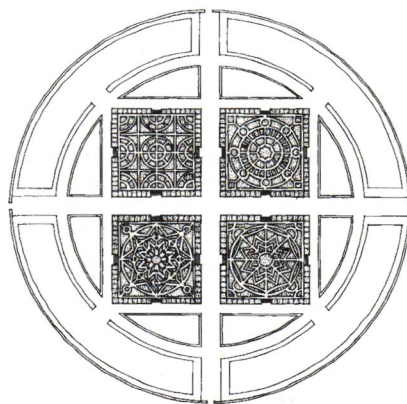
Gardens are the most sophisticated, concentrated, abstracted expression or representation of humanity’s relationship with its environment, what the French geographer Augustin Berque has nicely called an “art of milieu.” Renaissance humanists called garden art a “third nature” precisely because gardeners intervened in the physical world more thoroughly and more subtly than, say, farmers or town planners, whose work



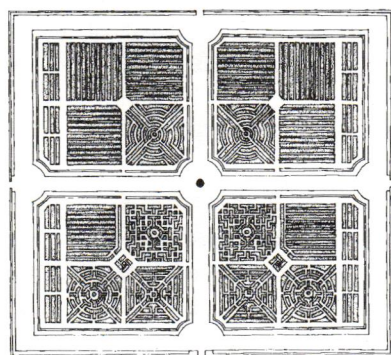
Übbegren Castle, a mid-17th-century painting by Aelbert Cuyp. Writes Appleton, “The terms ‘prospect,’ ‘refuge,’ and ‘hazard’ comprise a kind of shorthand for a highly complex system of symbolic messages which communicate information about strategic opportunities.” (From *The Symbolism of Habitat*.)



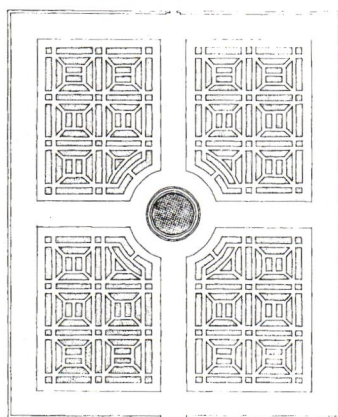
Leyden



Padua



Oxford



Paris

Fourfold plans of early botanical gardens. (From *The Poetics of Gardens*.)

Cicero had termed a “second nature” (his first being the unmediated world of gods—what today, in a more secular age, we might designate as “wilderness”). These are not the terms that *Poetics* employs, but, in much of its analysis of how sites work (or how they were set up to work), it is close to such concepts, as when gardens are said to “engage a site” in different ways, and when a dominant focus throughout is the consideration of garden sites in relation either to larger cultural landscapes or to “second nature.”

*The Poetics of Gardens* attempts various typologies of form and intention. Gardens are basically orderly (conspicuous for their grooming) or “natural” (the signs of care concealed), and neither is to be preferred over the other: both

are artificial. Gardens are also “settings, collections, pilgrimages, and patterns”—not categories that I am happy with, but the attempt to typify kinds of garden experiences is to be welcomed. Such systematization risks being procrustean, of course, but the results set out essential, if seemingly simplistic, bases for further discussion. And the possible restrictions of that process of systematization are offset by a rich range of exemplary material: eastern sites (including Australia) are extremely well represented, and there is an effective reliance on literary texts, such as those by Herman Melville, Edgar Allan Poe, Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*, and an 18th-century Chinese novel, *The Story of the Stone*.

*The Poetics of Gardens* is full of valuable plans, diagrams, and axiometric per-

spectives that certainly make the authors’ analyses easier to follow, and that are themselves, importantly, a form of analysis. Through them we are able to grasp how meanings inhabit form. (However, the text occasionally mentions elements that the plans fail to include—for instance, the site of the house at Bowood (Wiltshire, England); far worse, no northpoints are ever included). Based on this visual material, the strength of the book lies in its representation of the relationship of proposed typologies to analyses of specific sites—analyses which the authors pursue with skill and tact (in spite of their somewhat laughable rapture at Stourhead, which “seduces by offering the subtle pleasures of hermeneutics”!).

The book is not without deficiencies, notably on the historical side. And the seriousness of this needs to be underlined: as the authors frequently claim that present and future landscape architecture must explore “the storehouse of images and ideas, the encyclopedia of shapes and relationships” of the past, it is important to get the history right. To say this is not (as many will fear) to ask that contemporary design produce facsimiles of the past; it is simply to say that if you want to “make it new” you need to know exactly what “it” once was.

The authors misdate and misread William Kent’s Rousham, in Oxfordshire (forgetting that he added the Praeneste Terrace); they are wrong about details at Castle Howard (the Temple of Four Winds is not on a “hilltop”) and at Vaux-le-Vicomte (where the canal hardly “vanishes out of the manicured garden”); “Capability” Brown left no theoretical analysis whatsoever (alas); Humphry Repton was not so dedicated to the picturesque as they imply; they misread some lines of Alexander Pope, and mislocate one of his fundamental remarks about gardening and painting; they have the wrong architect for the gateway to the Oxford Botanical Gardens; and their remark on the indeci-

pherability of Hadrian's Villa seems wholly out of touch with current scholarship. Indeed, their references are often out of date and their sources insufficiently researched. And that is just the occidental material, which is all this reviewer can properly judge. Because the authors have little ear for historical speech and ideas, the book's weakest section is the imaginary conversations between legendary figures on garden form and meaning.

These quibbles aside, *The Poetics of Gardens* begins to establish a poetics (à la Aristotle or Stravinsky) of garden art. Others will want to take its analyses much further, and the book contains many hints for further work—notably the influence of design forms on behavioral patterns, the design dialectic of control and accident, the garden as art of representation, and the role of gardens in what the authors nicely call the “colloquium of the clamorous voices of memory”—including, presumably, our deeply recessed animal instincts.

ODILE HENAULT

### Today's Urban Park: Still On Shaky Grounds

What is a park today? “Fuck the park,” answers Dutch landscape designer Adriaan Geuze, coaxing the debate out of nostalgic grounds. “I really believe we should create more controversial areas, surrealistic street furniture, perverse spaces, just to provoke people.”<sup>1</sup> Eduard Bru, the Barcelona architect responsible for the master plan of the Vall d'Hebron area, one of the four 1992 Olympic sites, would certainly agree: “Present-day ‘urbanites’ continue to be saddled with a series of customs which are no longer theirs; and they cultivate those that are theirs in an almost shame-faced way. For example, driving to a supermarket car park and spending Sunday with the car door open, listening to the radio while their children play in the car park—a highly respectable custom, in which the users surround themselves with those objects most dear to them: the car, the children, the radio. In the Vall d'Hebron, we wanted to make provision for these uses.”<sup>2</sup>

Meanwhile, after a long-winded study of fifty participant entries in the 1982 Parc de la Villette competition, landscape architect Lodewijk Baljon placidly states: “The ‘ordinary’ park, the openness of a grassy or scintillating space is the most important quality for the ordinary park, long sight lines to dream away in, the tranquillity of simple spaces in which to entertain one's thoughts”!

The search for the urban park is on, and the need for theoretical reflection on the issue is felt strongly. Dutch publisher Architectura & Natura Press set out to answer this demand by publishing two books, the first a doctorate thesis by Baljon on the 1982 La Villette competi-

tion, and the second, a compendium of a February 1992 seminar, held under the auspices of the Panorama Foundation in the Netherlands.

At first glance, the idea behind Baljon's book, entitled *Designing Parks: An Examination of Contemporary Approaches to Design in Landscape Architecture*, a compilation of the entries submitted in the La Villette competition, is appealing. Indeed, one would expect a properly organized competition to attract enough creative participants to contribute considerably to a given field. However, what is perhaps most apparent from the La Villette entries is the uncertainty which clouds the urban parks issue today. The organizers' reaction to this uncertainty was to overload the program, which left most participants in the difficult situation (sometimes against their better judgment) of having to cram as many activities as possible on a fifty-hectare site.

One thing is clear, however: La Villette corresponds exactly to the type of site on which experimentation has been, and will be, taking place. These are sites that, until now, have been ignored or overlooked, either because of their industrial nature, or because of their peripheral locations. Indeed, Baljon's description of the La Villette site could easily apply to the Barcelona site of Vall d'Hebron. “[It] is situated in a transitional zone between the old city districts, with their dense and ordered fabric, and the neighboring suburban municipalities, whose development has been more open and less ordered. The boundary between the city and the suburbs is reinforced by the embankment of the ring-road.”

What clearly sets La Villette apart from the Barcelona site is the emblematic content intended by the organizers. The Vall d'Hebron plan was meant to provide sports facilities to a neglected area of the city and, although created with the Olympic games in mind, it was not intended to be a showpiece. The La

THE SYMBOLISM OF HABITAT: AN INTERPRETATION OF LANDSCAPE IN THE ARTS, Jay Appleton, University of Washington Press, 1990, 128 pp., illus., \$17.50.

THE POETICS OF GARDENS, Charles W. Moore, William J. Mitchell, William Turnbull, Jr., MIT Press, 1988, 272 pp., illus., \$17.50.

Villette promoters, on the other hand, intended it to be “an innovative cultural project . . . not so much a lung as a heart.”

Had Baljon set himself clear objectives and tried to understand what the urban park means today, his analysis would have been more useful. Instead, he opted to “let the entries speak for themselves,” attempting, unconvincingly, “to contribute to the development of the methodology of design analysis,” and, equally unconvincingly, “to contribute to the formation of theories of landscape design.”

In order to anchor his study, he selects six schemes, “not necessarily the best plans, but . . . suited to this purpose because of the fact that the designs clearly differ.” He then engages in an overdone and simplistic deconstruction of the schemes. His “exploration of the graphic composition” creates confusion and hinders rather than helps the reader’s comprehension of the designs. Also annoying is how one must constantly flip to the back of the book (to find the site plans mentioned in the text) in order to figure out what exactly Baljon intended to illustrate with his diagrams.

The fact that neither Bernard Tschumi’s nor OMA’s schemes were selected for this preliminary study is surprising: one feels entitled to an explanation. The author also neglects to provide any information on the history of this particular competition. Much is made of the physical site and its historical evolution, but there is practically no mention of the competition that was held on the same site in 1976 (a competition with a very different program and which Tschumi, for one, also entered).

Finally, Baljon does not identify the nine teams selected by the jury to refine their proposals for the second stage of this competition. This omission can only be interpreted as the author’s rejection of the jury’s decision. His lack of objectivity in this instance could perhaps be linked to the fact that the firm Bakker and Bleeker, with which he entered the competition, was not among the winners.



Storm barrier in Oosterschelde, Zeeland: fields lined with light and dark (cockles and mussels) shells; Adriaan Geuze, 1991. (From *Modern Park Design*.)

Curiously, Ank Bleeker’s name appears in the other publication by Architecture & Natura Press, *Modern Park Design*, which identifies him as the landscape architect responsible for putting together, in a “rather shocking” way, ideas from four projects (including one by Adriaan Geuze and his firm, West 8 Landscape Architects) for an entry in a 1989 competition for the small industrial town of Beverwijk.

*Modern Park Design*, although well intended, raises serious questions about editing. Granted, it is undoubtedly

difficult to summarize long hours of discussions among many participants, but surely there is a better solution than the rather confusing formula used in this book, which lacked a good editor as well as an English copy reader. It takes a while to understand what is happening and who is speaking: eventually, one catches on and is able to assess the various contributions made by a number of park designers, invited by the

Dutch Panorama Foundation in February 1992 to take part in a symposium entitled “The Park.” Guest lecturers were Adriaan Geuze, David Louwerse, Norfried Pohl, and Clemens Steenbergen from the Netherlands, Peter Latz from Germany, and Steen Hoyer from Denmark—all landscape designers. Two architects were also invited to take part in the symposium: Bernard Huet from France, and Andreu Arriola from Spain.

Had it not been for Geuze, the debate probably would have been quite sterile. He jolts participants into discussion by stating, for example, “there is absolutely no need for parks anymore, because all the 19th-century problems have been solved, and a new type of city has been created. The park and greenery have become worn-out clichés. Our parks will never have the beauty and power of those in the 19th century. But that is not the only reason. This century created a new type of order. Order can be based on disconnection and superimposing.” Iconoclastic at first blush, but in fact very much in tune with the realities facing us at the end of this millennium, Geuze’s statements are supported by striking work, such as his Oosterschelde storm-barrier in Zeeland, the Netherlands, where fields of infill land



Vall d'Hebron, Barcelona; Eduard Bru, 1992. (From *Quaderns de Arquitectura*.)

are lined with light- and dark-colored shells (cockles and mussels, as a matter of fact) in a very low-budget scheme.

Geuze's project for Schouwburgplein, a square in the center of Rotterdam, represents another example of what can be achieved when designers incorporate, rather than ignore, new conditions: "We thought of defining the square as the roof of a parking garage. . . . We proposed to empty the roof of the parking garage and to cover it with a kind of steel beam to build up the square." The designer collaborated with an aeronautics firm to devise metal panels—some of which were punched with holes for illumination; others were handed out to artists to work on. Fountains were modified with the addition of hydraulic lamps. ("When you insert a guilder, they change shape and this creates a continuous 'ballet,' a symphony," notes Geuze.)

One cannot help but wonder what would have resulted from an encounter between Geuze and Bru, who, for instance, justified his use of astroturf instead of grass in his intervention on the Vall d'Hebron site. The language is different, but the search is on similar terms. Not so with Arriola, also from Barcelona, who is content with a polite and subdued approach, even when faced with a problem—the major traffic round-about of Plaça de les Glories Catalanes in Barcelona, for example—

that would have represented a first-class challenge for either Bru or Geuze.

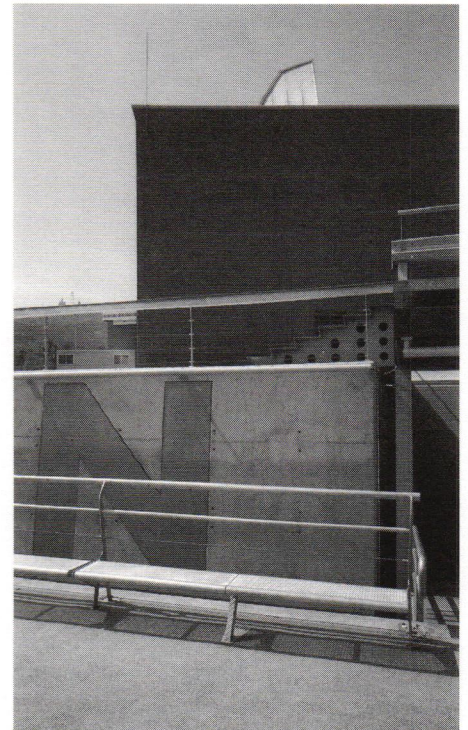
For French architect Bernard Huet, the mere possibility of a search into "untested territories," to use one of Bru's expressions, is totally discarded. "I hate to live on the periphery," he says, "and I have no admiration, or self-indulgence, for this kind of area. I think, and you know, that the people living there are there just because they are poor, they cannot afford to live anywhere else. So I think it is criminal for architects today, to make any kind of theory about this condition, because it is a tragedy."

During another event—a symposium organized by the Walker Art Center and the Minneapolis College of Art and Design's MCAD Gallery, which resulted in the book *The Once and Future Park—Village Voice* critic Edward Ball stated, "The world's most popular tourist destination is Disney World; the second most popular, Paris. What could this mean? Part of the answer may lie on the ground. Baron Haussmann bisected and quadrisectioned the capital with boulevards and axes, creating nodal points for monuments and converting the city's former *ruelles* and *culs-de-sac* into a readable, linear, and panoramic space. Might Haussmann's planification be a foreshadowing of the programmed environment, perspective views, and Taylorized traffic flows of the Disney theme parks?"<sup>3</sup> Sure-

ly, Ball would have interpreted Huet's Place Stalingrad in Paris as a perfect, Disneyland-type operation, which might have sparked one of the most relevant—but tabooed—debates today.

Indeed, the topic of the famous, or infamous, theme park was kept totally quiet during the Dutch seminar. It would have been interesting to hear Baljon's opinion on the topic, and, for that matter, the opinions of major park designers such as Latz and Geuze, since the La Villette program was dangerously close to that of a theme park.

Both books fall short of their promise, but the scarcity of available material on the urban park issue makes *Modern Park Design* a valuable companion. Baljon's study, though obviously the result of much effort, unfortunately does not contribute much to the emerging debate. His most valuable insight comes in the book's first few pages: "The moment the park is reduced to a recreational area, sports complex, or green strip, it loses its expression and meaning and there remains merely a util-



Vall d'Hebron, Barcelona; Eduard Bru, 1992. (From *Quaderns de Arquitectura*.)

itarian form. It is precisely the imagination—a certain mysterious, fantastical, or poetical quality—from which the park derives the rationale of its existence. Without imagination a park is a mere dry decor for people who come and go; a meaningless facade.” In order to find this “mysterious, fantastical, or poetical quality,” perhaps Baljon should follow the advice of Rem Koolhaas, whom he quotes in a footnote: “You must not subdue the waves but roam over them with virtuosity.”

## NOTES

1. Geuze’s talk, “Moving Beyond Darwin: Fuck the Park,” at “The Park” seminar, sponsored by the Panarama Foundation; Amsterdam, The Netherlands, February 1992; appears in *Modern Park Design* (Amsterdam: Architectura & Natura Press, 1993), p. 31.
2. Eduard Bru, “Untested Territories,” *Quaderns de Arquitectura* 193 (March-April 1992): 83.
3. Edward Ball, “To Theme or Not To Theme: Disneyfication without Guilt,” *The Once and Future Park*, Deborah Karasov and Steve Waryan, eds. (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1993), p. 31.

DESIGNING PARKS: AN EXAMINATION OF CONTEMPORARY APPROACHES TO DESIGN IN LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE, Lodewijk Baljon, Architectura & Natura Press, 1992, 322 pp., 187 illus., \$43.00.

MODERN PARK DESIGN: RECENT TRENDS, Martin Knuijt, Hans Ophuis, Peter van Saane, and David Louwse, editors, Architectura & Natura Press, 1993, 135 pp., illus., \$16.00.

BONNIE LOYD

## The Once and Future Park

Deborah Karasov and  
Steve Waryan, Editors

When we try to develop schemes for the future, we often manage only to catch up with the present. A group of writers and designers were asked to envision parks for the future, but their essays and installations made me realize that we haven’t yet figured out how to cope with the new environmental and social demands of today.

*The Once and Future Park* grew out of a symposium and exhibition organized by the Walker Art Center and the Minneapolis College of Art and Design. The occasion was the dedication of an expanded Minneapolis Sculpture Garden—an eleven-acre site used for temporary and permanent artworks, family workshops, summer youth employment, performances, and other activities—clearly a successful public space. The thoughtful book that resulted combines five essays and nine gallery installations exploring the future of the park. So little is published about public space and landscape design in comparison to architecture or landscape painting, for example, that an intelligent new book, even a brief one, is cause for celebration.

Deborah Karasov, a landscape architect and urban geographer who heads the Walker Art Center’s adult education programs, provides an introductory chapter reminding us that most parks are remnants of earlier municipal park movements, no longer in sync with our complex cultural needs today. She sets out the assignment: reinterpret parks to address our changing expectations for public life and, especially, our conflicted relationship with nature. Her focus, along with the foreword by Kathy Hal-

breich, director of the Walker Art Center, convince us that parks are not an outmoded form, but could be the ideal laboratories for testing social and environmental designs.

Surprisingly, Herbert Muschamp, the architecture critic for the *New York Times*, is the contributor who makes the strongest plea for incorporating environmental expertise into park design. He relates stories about several recent student and professional projects in which the designers treat parks as purely visual problems. When these designers did make a gesture toward the environment, such as proposing to make one park’s edge a reclaimed salt marsh, the lack of ecological research to back up the design made the environmental element seem like merely “green packaging.” Muschamp points out that despite our national alarm about the state of the environment, professionals with training in ecology are almost never key participants in park design. Muschamp ranges widely in his essay, from the Holocaust to advertisements in the *New Yorker*, probing the reasons for our inability to attack environmental issues in a practical way. Of course, there is a long history of treating landscape as primarily visual. Landscape has been a visual concept since at least the Renaissance, when architects transformed the settings around Italian villas into part of the visual composition.

No doubt, a large part of the difficulty is the increasing specialization of professionals in our society. Muschamp’s plea for crossdisciplinary design is echoed by other authors in this book, and he declares that parks may actually offer the best arena for specialists to experiment with collaboration.

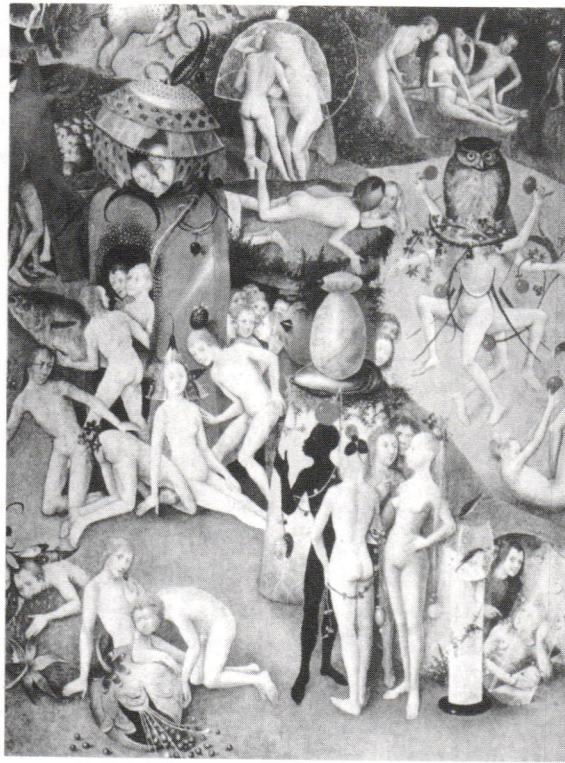
In this decade, the routine addition of public artists to design teams for public spaces has only heightened the emphasis on visual solutions. Muschamp believes the fault is not with the artists, but with the structures in which they work: “Art itself is made to look ridicu-



lous when artists are called upon to perform outside their area of competence. The problem with the garden designed by Jennifer Bartlett for Battery Park City in 1989, for instance, was not only its environmental insensitivity but also that her insensitivity called forth the public's latent hostility toward art." Despite such celebrated outrages as Bartlett's postage-stamp gardens, Muschamp claims that parks offer vast opportunities for artists to work in new ways.

My experience on a city arts-commission panel discouraged me when I realized that public artists are often expected to be the mediators with neighborhood groups, the experts on behavior in public places, the champions of environmental concerns, and the facilitators through municipal bureaucracies. Muschamp may be correct in asserting that parks present opportunities to artists, but park design also offers more burdens than a single art-school graduate can shoulder.

In his essay, the renowned urban historian Sam Bass Warner, Jr., sketches a crisp portrait of urban life in the 1850s—a portrait of crowding, disease, insufferable working conditions, as well as class and ethnic conflict. Into this crisis wandered Frederick Law Olmsted, who had toured England and marveled at the aristocratic English estate transformed into a municipal park. Olmsted's transplanted parks suited the times perfectly. His parks made sense, even economically and politically: a park developed on the edge of the city heightened the value of low-cost land and made the area ripe for real estate speculation; the resulting increase in tax returns subsidized patronage jobs of the many gardeners required in the heavily landscaped park. Warner's social history of the period gives Olmsted's beloved parks an even warmer glow, because the history makes clear just how perfectly tailored



Center panel detail from *The Gardens of Delight*, Hieronymus Bosch, ca. 1500. The tension between humankind and the natural environment has been problematic throughout history. (From *The Once and Future Park*.)

these parks were to the stresses of the time.

Next to this portrait of the 1850s Warner holds up a snapshot of our own times. Environmental problems, the isolating effects of urban culture, the drive for consumption, the dispersed city, in addition to long work weeks and ethnic conflicts, pose different requirements for public spaces in the 1990s. The shopping mall suits us better than Olmsted's pastoral meadow. Warner refers to Sim Van der Ryn and Peter Calthorpe in drafting goals for new parks: "The first goal of future parks should be to help the metropolis build sustainable relationships with its water, atmosphere, and plant systems. The second, and compatible, goal should be to help the metropolis become a more sociable place for its inhabitants." And one source of space for these parks, Warner submits, is the ubiquitous oversized asphalt parking lot.

Patricia Phillips compares two recent

parks in her chapter—the stiff Floriade Park near The Hague and the imaginative Papago Park City Boundary Project near Phoenix, Arizona. Phillips is a noted figure in the public art world, commissioning works, writing for *Artforum*, and chairing the art department at SUNY at New Paltz, and her essay closely follows the concerns of the art world. Phillips describes Floriade Park, designed initially for the mammoth six-month garden exposition held every ten years, as an "opportunistic venture." Like the parks of the 1850s, this one is expected to fuel real estate development now that the exposition is over. Although it is billed as the landscape of the future by its creators, nature is tightly controlled throughout, recalling, as Phillips remarks, "the old and exhausted idea of formal Italian and French gardens. . . . Discovery is overwhelmed by didacticism."

In contrast, Phillips warms to the Papago Park City Boundary Project, designed by the artist Jody Pinto and the landscape architect Steve Martino. The two worked with a damaged site in the arid Arizona desert, between Phoenix, Scottsdale, Tempe, and the ancient Native American ruins of Casa Grande and Squaw Peak. They found ways to make the park a link rather than a boundary, and they constructed an ingenious water-collection and irrigation system that rejuvenates the land.

Phillips struggles in her essay to help us visualize these two unusual parks. She is less successful in this short space in pinpointing strategies that will work elsewhere. She convinces us that the collaboration between artist and landscape architect produced an elegant design, but we would be hard-pressed to say exactly why it succeeds and how they came up with it. Nevertheless, as a critique of two prominent park designs from very different schools, Phillips'



Papago Park City Boundary Project with rock terraces forming several water-harvesting pools, Phoenix, Arizona; Jody Pinto and Steve Martino, 1992. (From *The Once and Future Park*.)

essay is a welcome contribution.

Edward Ball, a critic for the *Village Voice*, offers a lively essay titled, "To Theme or Not To Theme: Disneyfication without Guilt." He opens with the startling premise that the French, many of whom were appalled by the opening of EuroDisney in 1992, may already have a themed environment of their own: Paris. Ball escorts us on an entertaining trip through the roots of theme parks, such as Coney Island and the 1939 New York World's Fair, and then on to current outposts such as South Street Seaport in New York City and Seaside in Florida. Ball keeps a postmodern distance from his subject, first mocking then defending, next dissecting and reassembling, until at the end of the essay he actually recommends new forms of theme parks as a remedy for the ills of public spaces. He suggests: "What if landscape architects began to create themed environments of discarded commodities? What about a park made of old automobiles, or used Nintendo games, or high-top sneakers piled in mounds?" Are his wild proposals at all useful in generating new thinking?

A fascinating nugget in his essay is the report that Caribbean islanders have begun to build shotgun-style cottages (*casitas*), painted white, with peaked roofs and screen doors, on vacant lots in East Harlem, the Lower East Side, and parts of Brooklyn, New York. The designs of nonprofessionals often stand out as vibrant and authentic, in real life

as well as in this essay.

Diana Balmori, a respected landscape architect based in New Haven, Connecticut, tackles the challenge of new parks with the careful organization of a professional. She demonstrates that we can build on the park concepts of the past to construct appropriate parks for the future. First, she reviews changes in the American city and observes that our sprawling "edge cities" lend themselves to linear parks, connecting one small center to another. Next, she examines changes in financial resources and park management that have led to public-private partnerships, changes mentioned by other contributors. She concedes that private support is necessary, but cautions that "whoever pays the bills makes the decisions." In response, she foresees a Productive Park, where activities such as sewage cleanup or shore protection could generate money for the creation and maintenance of parks. To address shifts in parks programs over time, often because of shifts in the ethnicity or age of users, Balmori proposes designs that are organic, evolving. Examining changes in available land for parks, she singles out the network of abandoned railroad lines, canal lines, waterfronts, and other defunct public lands, many already transformed into greenways that delight joggers, walkers, and bikers. Like Herbert Muschamp, Balmori believes that collaborations among increasingly specialized professionals are necessary to solve the increasingly complex envi-

ronmental and social requirements of urban public spaces. However, she goes further in describing the difficulties of communicating across professional boundaries, but remains insistent about the necessity. Balmori's essay is the summing up—a shrewd review of the problems, with reasonable suggestions for the next step.

The final third of this short catalog presents the installations, drawings, models, and statements of the nine design teams who took part in the 1992 exhibition at the Minneapolis College of Art and Design. The ideas are often provocative. Amy Stefan comments that cemeteries give us roots and may in the future give us park land; she stacks pine boxes on cinder blocks next to a single evergreen, its roots still bundled in burlap. Mira Engler and Gina Crandell layer three networks of urban waste—curbside recycling, transparent collection bins in parking lots, and citywide facilities such as sewage-treatment pools—into a visionary park for the future. Catherine Murray and Thomas Oslund tease us about our current "landscapes in a box," such as the manicured pastoral golf course; they incorporate Midwestern elements into their humorous miniature golf course installation, by stacking sod and creating a "sand trap" of corn seed. Some of the other designers' statements are mystifying, and some seem merely prosaic extensions of current design practice. We long to see the installations, but appreciate the hints provided in this catalog.

THE ONCE AND FUTURE PARK, Deborah Karasov and Steve Waryan, editors, Princeton Architectural Press, 1993, 58 pp., illus., \$19.95.

SUE GOULD

## Good Mourning California

Barbara Stauffacher Solomon

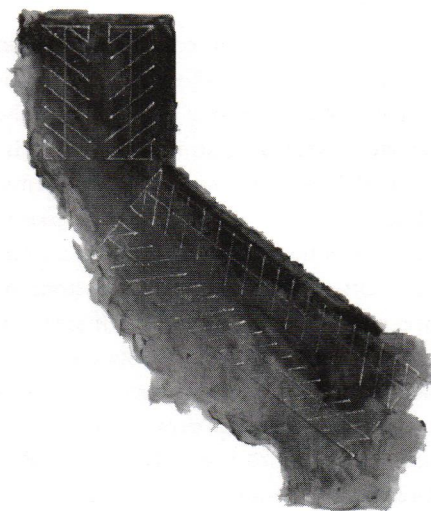
For a book whose announced intention is lament, *Good Mourning California* has an oddly celebratory tone. The book chronicles the transformation of California from the myth of Edenic paradise to today's Gomorrah-by-the-sea (by way of Babylon). The author, Barbara Stauffacher Solomon, is a native Californian as well as an artist, landscape designer, and architect, and these disciplines inform her sensibilities and give her a unique perspective on the successes as well as the follies of her native state.

The energy and wit of her artwork enliven the text, which, as she explains, compiles and reinterprets much that others have already been written about California. Her selection of quoted material is astute and creates some fascinating connections. Many by-now-common contemporary issues are addressed with verbal jump cuts, in a shorthand that assumes familiarity with the latest headlines. But the interplay of social, political, and environmental issues, though touched on repeatedly, never seems to coalesce into a clearly articulated theme. Still, the book is tremendously entertaining to read and is studded with insights about land use and capsule histories of the state's development, which seem to flow effortlessly. The text is poetic and jazzy—a riff on the state of the state. It is rife with puns and wordplay (“In California, gardens are plots from someone else's story”) as well as glib aphorisms (“Living in California is a way of committing suicide without dying” and “California is Mother Earth who never dies; she just freshens up her makeup”). The metaphors have multiple meanings; the writing is a verbal collage.

The book is divided into three sections, “Nature,” “Garden,” and “Landscape,” with an introduction titled “The Island of California,” a brief meditation on the prescient early descriptions and myths about the state. Spanish explorers described California as an island (which, according to one geological theory, was true 570 million years ago) and as a land of gold: “Montano, in his 1571 map of the world [placed] Ophir, the Biblical land of gold . . . exactly where, inevitably, in 1848, gold was discovered in California.”

“Nature, in California, is pure gold,” Stauffacher Solomon declares, and follows with a breathless free association that runs from the golden sun and the Gold Rush to golden arches and the Golden Gate. She intersperses many popular images in the “Nature” section, all of which emanate from the golden globes of the sun and the orange. Notable images include Uncle Sam harvesting grapes (from a fruit-crate label), the Marlboro man against the big sky, and a wonderful Mae West-type figure, labeled Mother Nature.

The author notes the imposition of



California cut into sections according to the “natural” lines of a parking lot; Barbara Stauffacher Solomon. (From *Good Mourning California*.)

European standards of nature by the conquering settlers: “Nature in the Far West did not look like the primeval green forests of Europe or New England,” and it became “the Yankee’s mission to make the golden desert bloom into a green English garden.” In the “Gardens” section, she reveals that “the words *garden* and *paradise* both come from roots meaning *enclosed*” and that “gardens, like art and movies, are framed images that people make and then move into.” A series of slide frames display a progression of images, some drawn, some photographed, from the full “green rectangle of paradise,” the green geometry of the tennis court and the ping-pong table, to glass-enclosed shopping-mall Edens. The images accompanying this section are among the wittiest and most acerbic in the book; for example, a dollar bill is folded to read as a landscape plan and titled “Design for a Garden.”

The book progresses with short histories of the movie industry’s portrayal of the moral tension between the “wanton wilderness” and “ordered” gardens (complete with deconstructions of favorite films, such as *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valence*, *Shane*, and *Thelma and Louise*), and discussions of the politics of water in California, of politically correct green landscapes without water, and of the distortions of using development moratoriums to keep social undesirables out of the PUD (planned unit development) garden.

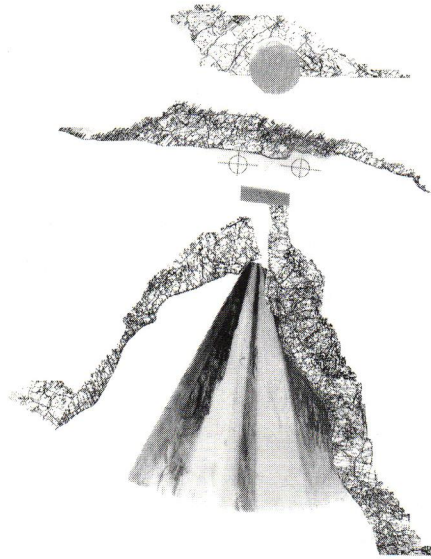
In her previous book, *Green Architecture and the Agrarian Garden* (New York: Rizzoli, 1990), landscape was defined as “man-made places” and gardens as “landscape[s] of fictional scenery” and “illusions of paradise.” In *Good Mourning California*, landscapes are far more broadly defined to be “everything we see and don’t see following the yellow line.” The book emphatically reminds readers of the degree to which we have allowed our perceptions of the landscape to be determined by the highway,

by our constant motion and the view through our windshields and in our rearview mirrors. “Now that only 3 percent of tourist photographers get more than 100 yards from their cars . . . signs direct you to scenic points to help you aim your camera,” Stauffacher Solomon observes.

The first part of the “Landscape” section is photographic: a series of progressive road shots taken at intervals while traveling intimately close to the surface of the road, as if the stop motion of the camera could reveal to us the anatomy of our movement in the landscape, as Eadweard Muybridge’s camera documented human movement a century ago. Views of the limitless desert alternate with the limitless Pacific; speeding semis, high-tension wires, five-level freeway interchanges, and lines of palm trees across the horizon are juxtaposed with rows of wind turbines that appear planted in the landscape. The book’s highly expressive and forceful sketches are permeated with the iconography of the highway: “The green rectangle of paradise is now the glossy green highway sign,” the author writes.

The book ends with expositions on thirteen questions, among them: “Is California a phantasmagoria? A performance piece? A gold mine? A greenhouse? A tragic promised land? A life-sized map of her myths?” The tone of the answers to these questions is coolly ironic and amused (à la Joan Didion, who is quoted extensively), yet loving—as one would talk of an irritating, wayward, and undisciplined but cherished child. Unlike in her previous book, the author concludes that “California is an agreed-upon illusion. The only reason that anyone believes it is that everyone does.” Yet she specifically refrains from drawing direct value judgments or endorsing solutions to the many environmental problems she cites.

Stauffacher Solomon duly notes the jeremiads of social critics like Mike Davis, and acknowledges the problems



Drawing by Barbara Stauffacher Solomon, from the “Gardens” section of *Good Mourning California*.

of a society divided into gated communities and ethnically segregated slums, as well as the impacts of untrammelled growth and unwise resource allocations. She also questions popular values in the cradle of the car culture. Still, the book’s tone is exuberant. Perhaps this is because it was written before the recession reached the West in full force, and before the Los Angeles riots proved Davis to be tragically prescient.

The images of this concluding section are far more expressionistic, more emotional, and less cerebral than those in the previous sections, somewhat reminiscent of Robert Osborn’s 1960 polemic about American values, *The Vulgarians* (Greenwich: New York Graphic Society). Often visual poetry, the illustrations are wonderfully witty and insightful puns, mostly based on the state’s shape. The cover image of California as Queen Califa—the state portrayed as a ditzy redhead—echoes installation artist Red Grooms’ personifications of urban landscapes in his “Ruckus Manhattan” exhibit of the mid-1980s.

In format, the book is a hybrid—neither strictly an illustrated text nor a picture book with extended captions.

The 8-1/2-by-11-inch format is more like a sketchbook than a coffee-table book. The author has designed the layout with alternating spreads of text and art. In her foreword Stauffacher Solomon tells us that “the words and drawings were made consecutively.” However, their arbitrary separation on alternating spreads creates awkward gaps and damages the cohesion of language and art. In her previous book, text and drawings achieved a seamless synthesis even within a graphic grid. In *Good Mourning California* the text layout is less imaginative—a more rigid, somewhat dated arrangement. Her experimental use of varying line lengths has seemingly little to do with anything other than ensuring that the text is accommodated in the alternating spreads.

One last criticism: each section has a brief bibliography, but an index for quick reference to the many wonderful quotes would be even more useful. In spite of these quibbles, on balance this is an entertaining, informative, and thought-provoking book for anyone interested in how society has shaped the piece of America that is, in historian-philosopher William Irwin Thompson’s phrase, at the edge of history.<sup>1</sup> The view from your car window will never be the same.

#### NOTES

1. W. I. Thompson’s book, *At the Edge of History* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), was one of the first cultural critiques of the state of California.

GOOD MOURNING CALIFORNIA, Barbara Stauffacher Solomon, Rizzoli, 1992, 143 pp., illus., \$45.00.

ELIZABETH MEYER

## Denatured Visions: Landscape and Culture in the Twentieth Century

*Stuart Wrede and William  
Howard Adams, Editors*

More than one hundred landscape architects, architects, and historians congregated in New York City in October 1988 to participate in an unprecedented event, a symposium on "the issue of landscape in the 20th century," sponsored by the Museum of Modern Art. With the exception of a small exhibition and catalog from 1964 entitled *Gardens and the Modern Landscape*, curated by Elizabeth Kassler, and a few drawings by Brazilian landscape architect Roberto Burle-Marx displayed on the periphery of the museum's permanent modern architecture collection, the MoMA has generally neglected the topic of landscape and landscape architecture.

The timing of the symposium, entitled *Landscape and Culture in the Twentieth Century*, was right. The audience consisted of a generation of landscape designers and historians who were involved in rediscovering early-20th-century landscape architectural history. Frustrated by the limitations of the standard landscape text, Norman Newton's *Design on the Land* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1976), this group actively participated in primary research about many designers who were productive during the 20th century, such as Fletcher Steele, Gabriel Guevrekian, Pierre-Emile Legrain, the Vera Brothers, Beatrice Farrand, Gilmore Clark and Michael Rapuano, Ellen Shipman, Christopher Tunnard, Daniel Kiley, Garrett Eckbo, James Rose, Hideo Sasaki, Roberto Burle-Marx, Lawrence Halprin, and Peter Walker. In addition to historians,

attendees included designers whose educations in the 1970s and 1980s exposed them to the blurred boundaries between art, ecology, and architecture. Their interest in crossing categories and exploring the spaces in-between was accompanied by studies of, and respect for, these associated fields.

Outside the field of landscape architecture, history and the landscape have not been as marginal in recent decades as they were earlier this century. Beginning in the late 1960s, artists discovered the land as a subject and a site for their work. John Beardsley's *Earthworks and Beyond* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1984) and Lucy Lippard's *Overlay* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983) attest to the impressive extent of different aspects of the earth-art movements. In architecture, the garden and landscape infiltrated the design studios at universities such as Cornell and Princeton, becoming a vital aspect of urban as well as architectural design. From Colin Rowe to Michael Graves to Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, and even Peter Eisenman, the space beyond the building edge was bestowed with a figurative and textual role. By 1988, an assessment of the collective impact of these various explorations into the landscape over the previous two decades seemed overdue. Both groups—historians and designers—looked forward to the cross-fertilization of ideas that was sure to result from the museum's symposium. Unfortunately, many attendees were disappointed to find that the two-day event did not produce the depth of analysis that the subject warranted. In retrospect, what happened at the MoMA is a microcosm of the issues of landscape in the 20th century.

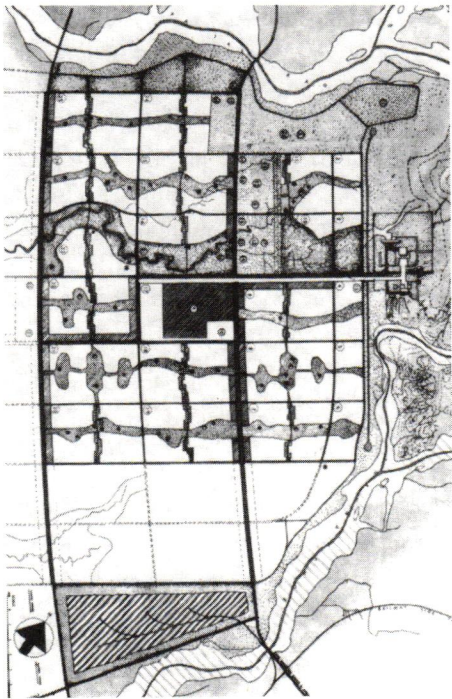
While *Denatured Visions*, the anthology of essays that resulted from that contentious weekend, is an excellent, if partial, record of the conundrum of landscape in modern art and architecture, it is not a satisfactory account of the 20th-century history of landscape

architecture. Fortunately, the editors, Stuart Wrede, director of the Department of Architecture and Design at the MoMA, and William Howard Adams, author of several books on architecture and garden history, outline the initial premise of the symposium and the ensuing themes in the book's introduction. From the outset, readers are aware of the anthology's biases.

Wrede and Adams begin with three premises: that the modern visual arts were "hostile" to the landscape; that architecture and nature were "divorced" in the modern movement; and that a "vital" tradition of modern designed landscapes has never emerged. Each premise is addressed, and sometimes contradicted, in the individual essays that follow.

Robert Rosenblum's "The Withering Greenbelt: Aspects of Landscape in Twentieth-Century Painting" reinforces the first premise insofar as it is apparent that Rosenblum, a respected art historian, had not considered the landscape as a critical issue in his previous writings. (Though in 1991 he published the book *The Landscape in Twentieth-Century Art* [New York: Rizzoli].) His essay strings together a loose narrative about artistic retreat into the garden or primitive nature as a minor aside to the century's primary fascinations. In works by Claude Monet, Henri Rousseau, William Morris, and Robert Irwin, Rosenblum discerns a "feeling of growing remoteness" toward the land and nature.

The book's second premise is directly contradicted in Caroline Constant's article "From the Virgilian Dream to Chandigarh: Le Corbusier and the Modern Landscape." One of the few substantially researched contributions to be found in this anthology, Constant tracks the evolution of Le Corbusier's attitudes toward nature and focuses on his design for the landscape at Chandigarh, the new capital city in the Punjab. In addition to her considerable formal insights, Constant makes a profound observation



Plan for Chandigarh, India; Le Corbusier, 1952.  
(From *Denatured Visions*.)

about Le Corbusier's ideas about the landscape: unlike his *a priori* theories about architecture, which were subsequently tested and revised through practice, Le Corbusier's attitudes about the landscape emerged *a posteriori*, as a result of his practice. Hence, built projects must be considered in their contexts and as a series to interpret or understand Le Corbusier's theoretical stance about the modern designed landscape.

Wrede and Adams' third premise underscores the errors of their methodological approach to assembling the speakers for the event. Rather than challenge their own assumption—that the modern designed landscape tradition did not exist—by identifying scholars of 20th-century landscape architecture whose research could support or rebuke this premise, Wrede and Adams resort to a tautological argument. They find reasons why the modern designed landscape did not emerge and ask scholars from a variety of related fields (who know little about the topic but much about why their disciplines were not

interested in the landscape) to confirm their own biases. The first explanation—that modernizing societies interested in technology, mass production, and mass communication developed rather than designed land—ignores the extraordinary designed landscapes that emerged from early-20th-century automobile culture, such as the urban parkway systems designed by Gilmore Clarke and his staff in New York City. As Leo Marx articulates in his essay, "The American Ideology of Space," there was a tension between the American myths of land ownership and cultivation as a prerequisite of citizenship, on the one hand, and of unlimited wilderness as the essence of the American psyche, on the other. This tension resulted in one of 19th-century America's greatest contributions to the design arts: the urban park. The American commodification of its revered land did not preclude invention in landscape design, but was a precondition of its design response to the city.

Wrede and Adams offer two rationales to explain the lack of a modern designed landscape tradition. First, the field of architecture has generally viewed landscape as a visual construct, as abstract space (of light and air, a place for exercise and rest) that envelopes buildings in a cloth of pastoral green. This background landscape is not designed, but given "natural." But such a definition of landscape (in contrast to "nature," "site," or "garden," whose various meanings and forms are never clearly stated in the book, and are carelessly used as synonyms, always in opposition to architecture) leaves no room for considering the work of many modern architects who did address the designed land, such as Frank Lloyd Wright, Richard Neutra, Gunnar Asplund and Sigurd Lewerentz, and Eliel Saarinen.

Wrede and Adams' second rationale for the lack of a modern designed landscape tradition is convincing. The field of modern landscape architecture is marked by a lack of critical analysis. The

symposium and book could have addressed this lack, or focused on the marginality of landscape in 20th-century art and architecture movements. *Denatured Visions* might have provided a timely forum for a scholarly and provocative dialogue between designers and historians about these problems, but the organizers/editors equivocated on the scope of the project. The editors equated the lack of analysis with the absence of significant designed landscapes; consequently, scholars researching contemporary landscape designers were not invited to present papers. Moreover, Wrede and Adams avoided the tough work of questioning the ideological underpinnings of why landscape and nature were overlooked by critics and historians of modernity. As a result, the book's essays simply document the status quo. They do not form the basis for revising received histories of modern art and design, and they do not initiate new historiographic or critical methods for discussing the designed landscape.

These shortcomings aside—and this landscape architect's disappointments having been assuaged by the passage of time—the thirteen essays collected in this catalog offer an eclectic array of positions on the modern landscape. Most of the authors are familiar to students of contemporary art and architecture, and many of their essays have been published elsewhere in slightly different forms. Leo Marx's and Caroline Constant's contributions are the most substantial, possessing a depth not evident in the other works—undoubtedly because their topics are part of larger scholarly projects. These two authors, a cultural historian and an architect respectively, present narrow topics thoroughly researched, clearly argued, and eloquently written. Other well-known individuals contributed articles that suffer from being summaries, rather than excerpts, of larger projects. Architectural historian Vincent Scully's "Architecture: The Natural and the Man-Made," soci-

ologist Galen Cranz's "Four Models of Municipal Park Design in the United States," and art historian John Beardsley's "Earthworks: The Landscape after Modernism" compare poorly to the full-length books written by each of these scholars.

Scully's article is basically an abstract of his book of the same title. Spanning centuries and continents, he begins with ancient Native American attitudes toward the land, which are manifest in their structures, and ends with Leon Krier's unbuilt proposals for La Villette in Paris. Besides the obvious problem of shallowness in this eleven-page summary of a couple of thousand years of history, Scully's article suffers from its conclusion about the garden's contribution to the postmodern city. By crediting the classical garden—which, one may assume, refers to the geometrically shaped garden—with healing "the wounds afflicted to the city by the International Style," Scully ignores the social consequences of urban renewal and its vast, amorphous, open spaces. Enclosure and figured space may stitch together a physical pattern, but they do not ensure that the lived experience and social spaces of the city are similarly healed. In making this sweeping conclusion, Scully misses the opportunity to bring his extraordinary formal analysis of 17th-century French buildings and gardens to bear on the work of two of the 20th century's most prominent American landscape architects, Dan Kiley and Peter Walker, who both acknowledge a debt to André Le Nôtre's masterpiece at Vaux-le-Vicomte.

Cranz's article reflects the two limitations of her book, *The Politics of Park Design* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1982). Categorization into periods, styles, or, in this case, program, oversimplifies histories of design. By describing the history of American parks in four time periods, she excludes projects that do not happen to fit into her paradigms. Still, her misreadings of the works she does address are more disturbing than those she

omits. In particular, Cranz perpetuates a reading of the 19th-century urban park as an antidote to the evil city—a view that has been challenged by numerous urban historians, such as Al Fein, Leo Marx, James Machor, Francesco Dal Co, and Ethan Carr. This simplistic interpretation of the park and city as antithetical entities ignores the historical evidence of the park as an urban institution, on par with the public library or museum, which helped democratize the city by educating its citizens. Yet her article's biases are still shared by many architects and urban designers who have not read the writings of landscape architects like Frederick Law Olmsted, H. W. S. Cleveland, George Kessler, Jens Jensen, and John Nolen, as well as the more recent chroniclers noted above.

Beardsley's article outlines the thesis of his popular book, *Earthworks and Beyond*, that the end of modernity was signaled as much by the restoration of the landscape in art and architecture as by a renewed interest in history. This idea is supported by three other contributors, Marc Treib, John Dixon Hunt,

and Caroline Constant, not to mention the multitude of earth artists, site-specific sculptors, and public artists Beardsley mentions, such as Robert Smithson, Michael Heizer, Walter de Maria, Herbert Bayer, James Pierce, Nancy Holt, and Andrew Leicester.

Hunt's "The Garden as Cultural Object" stands out in *Denatured Visions* for its precision of language and categories as well as its argument for the inextricability of culture and nature in the production of gardens and landscapes. Given his background in literature, Hunt clearly prefers landscape designers who situate their works within the arts of representation. Though not surprising when he is elucidating the 18th-century garden, which was created within a culture that linked poetry, painting, and gardening, it is peculiar when he ends praising Ian Hamilton Findlay, the late-20th-century concrete poet and artist who shaped his own literary garden, Stonypath, out of the swelling hills of the Scottish countryside and the rich traditions of Western literature. Such overreliance on narrative to structure a garden seems at odds with contemporary culture's interests in the spatial, phenomenal, and temporal characteristics of the land. (Hunt is not alone in his admiration for Findlay. Contributors Beardsley and Treib also refer to Stonypath in their short essays.) Despite its curious ending, Hunt's essay whets the appetite for the recently published collection of writings by Hunt, entitled *Gardens and the Picturesque: Studies in the History of Landscape Architecture* (see review on page 29).

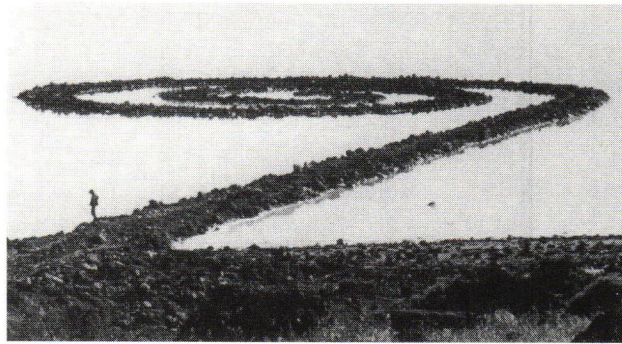
Most of the remaining essays are so brief that they do little more than identify landscape designers, projects, or issues, which readers may decide to research more in depth. Stephen Krog's "Whither the Garden?" assesses landscape architecture design in the 1970s and 1980s, and finds the works overly reliant on aesthetics and lacking "depth of thinking." His conclusions overlook



California Scenario, Costa Mesa, California; Isamu Noguchi, 1982. (From *Denatured Visions*.)

the apocalyptic ecological imperative of a number of other essays in this collection. Instead, he discusses three projects he admires for their integrity, their deep exploration of a few ideas, and their conviction that the designed landscape is capable of “revealing some sense of what life is about.” Krog’s evocations of Robert Irwin’s Wave Hill intervention, Luis Barragán’s concept of the garden as a place of serenity, and Terry Harkness’ East Central Illinois garden leave the reader with vivid images of a possible postmodern landscape. Paul Groth’s “Vernacular Parks” and J. B. Jackson’s “The Past and Future Park” urge contemporary designers to consider marginal sites (shopping malls, sports arenas, parking lots) and activities (waxing cars, drinking beers, making out) as the source for future invention. The territory of suburban existence is rife with spaces and programs awaiting design attention. These two articles don’t analyze or prescribe. They seem content to identify.

While this notion of landscape writing as commentary is expected of writers like Jackson, it is most surprising from Kenneth Frampton, who contributed an article entitled “In Search of the Modern Landscape.” Given Frampton’s reputation as one of the most prominent historians of modern architecture, his survey of landscape as seen by architects and as shaped by landscape architects was shockingly superficial at MoMA’s symposium. The revised essay version of his talk, which expands the number of landscape architects mentioned from one (Christopher Tunnard) to six (Tunnard, Eckbo, Kiley, Burle-Marx, Jensen, and Alfred Caldwell) displays considerable effort on Frampton’s part to address the criticism leveled at him by the audience at the symposium. Nonetheless, when Kiley’s designs are described as “the embellishment of botanical form,” one realizes how far we have to go before the



Spiral Jetty, Great Salt Lake, Utah; Robert Smithson, 1970.  
(From *Denatured Visions*.)

spatiality of trees is perceived by architectural historians. A more truthful title for this article may have been “My Search for the Modern Landscape.”

Several participants at the 1988 symposium are not included in *Denatured Visions*. Neither architect Bernard Tschumi nor landscape architect Ian McHarg’s comments in panel discussions were developed into essays. Strikingly different in their backgrounds and perspectives, these two educators are among the most controversial within the field of landscape architecture. Near the end of the symposium, McHarg rebuked the organizers and speakers for ignoring the structure of the land and the processes of nature in their assessments and narratives of the modern landscape. Speaking in terms of art and architecture, they had no vocabulary for describing the land as a subject in its own right.

Immediately following McHarg’s presentation, Tschumi spoke. This chance encounter of an ecologist with a poststructuralist created one of the most powerful juxtapositions of the day. Reiterating familiar themes, Tschumi identified the park as a place for urban experiments, for imagining future models of the city. His omission from the anthology means that of one of the most important built critiques of the modern landscape—Parc de la Villette in Paris—is absent from this document.

The final form of *Denatured Visions* is a sanitized version of the MoMA sym-

posium. Perhaps this is the case with all symposium proceedings. But this was a gathering that produced agitation during sessions, debate between sessions, and, fortunately, productive criticism afterward. Two other symposia were conceived almost immediately in response to the MoMA event: the University of Minnesota’s “The Landscape and the Avant-Garde: Can They Be Reconciled?” in April 1989; and later that year, the University of California, Berkeley’s “Modern Landscape Architecture [Re]Evaluated,” which resulted in the book *Modern Landscape Architecture: A Critical Review*, edited by Marc Treib (reviewed on page 23). Both produced half a dozen significant essays that have enriched the methodological underpinnings of modern landscape architecture history and theory, in addition to expanding the body of knowledge on individual designers and projects. Since 1988, “the issue of landscape in the 20th century” has received considerable attention from scholars and critics alike. Perhaps this would have happened without the MoMA symposium. Perhaps not. *Denatured Visions* is only one of the many products of that lively weekend in New York, and it is far from the best.

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DENATURED VISIONS: LANDSCAPE AND CULTURE IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY, Stuart Wrede and William Howard Adams, editors, Museum of Modern Art, New York (distributed by Harry N. Abrams), 1991, 143 pp., illus., \$19.95.



JUDITH HEINTZ

## Modern Landscape Architecture: A Critical Review

Mark Treib, Editor

In Genesis, God hands down to humankind, in addition to his likeness, “dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.” In other words, according to Judeo-Christian tradition, humankind may do whatever it wishes with the earth and sky. This notion has long informed art and architecture, and has led to our irresponsible use of the planet’s resources. Texts often have separated humans and nature, as if nature somehow did not include humans, and philosophers have repeatedly sought to explain our relationship with it. Strikingly, many commonalities are found between seemingly divergent ideas. Whether nature is idealized, as by the Romantics, or exploited, as is more often the case, each embodies the same attitude, which has ultimately led to the destruction of the environment: that we feel superior to and separate from all other forms of life.

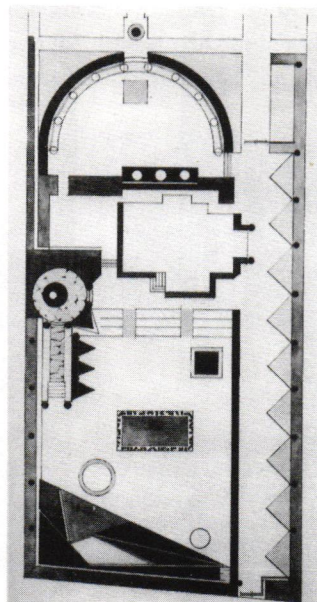
The conflict between “separate and preserve” and “integrate and possibly disrupt” is an important issue for landscape architects. Here, meaning must be injected into nature and ecology to ensure they are perceived as more than merely a science—which, with its impulse to quantify, divide, and name—distances us from the subject of study. Because humans are part of nature, the issue is not exclusively ecological or environmental: our social and physical needs become part of the global system, and require better integration in order

to benefit both humankind and the larger environmental system. A spiritual connection between humans and nature (of the sort achieved by the work of Frank Lloyd Wright and Frederick Law Olmsted) may prove to be more effective in accomplishing such integration than purely scientific explanations about how the global environmental system works. Such attitudes about nature and our role in it comes to bear on a designer’s ability to create a sense of place, a place with meaning beyond merely satisfying physical needs, an approach that designers must take for any project, large or small.

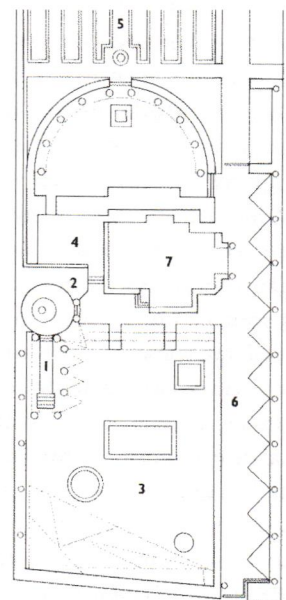
Marc Treib’s compilation of essays, *Modern Landscape Architecture: A Critical Review*, is rich with ideas for landscape architects and designers to pursue and contemplate. The book is the first that deals exclusively with modernism and landscape architecture. It presents a history of the period (approximately 1920 to 1960), as well as some background so that the nonprofessional can understand the context of modernism, how it differed from its precedents and how it revolutionized design. The book gathers texts by landscape architects of the period (Dan Kiley, James Rose, Gar-

rett Eckbo, Christopher Tunnard) and by present-day historians and critics evaluating the subject from the vantage point of time passed. Treib, Catherine Howett, John Dixon Hunt, and Pierce Lewis write about the period as a whole. Dorothee Imbert’s essay focuses on the French modernists, particularly Pierre-Emile Legrain; Thorbjorn Andersson reviews the work of the Stockholm park system in the 1940s. Gregg Bleam, Michael Laurie, Lance Neckar, and Reuben Rainey contribute detailed examinations of the work of Dan Kiley, Thomas Church, Tunnard, and Eckbo. Peter Walker discusses the rise of the corporate landscape architectural design office in postwar America, and Martha Schwartz examines the influence of modernism and art on her own work.

It is interesting to compare original source material by designers of the period with the thoughts of contemporary critics on the same topics—whether on a specific designer or on the period in general. The essays that dwell on the formal aspects of modernist landscape architecture—particularly those by Rainey and Bleam on Eckbo and Kiley respectively—would have been more useful had they presented more of the



1. Corridor
2. Salle fraîche
3. Sunken lawn room
4. Dining room
5. Kitchen garden
6. Corridor (the “lost axis”)
7. House



Plan of the garden for Jeanne and André Tachard, La Celle-Saint-Cloud, France; Pierre-Emile Legrain, 1923. (From *Modern Landscape Architecture*.)

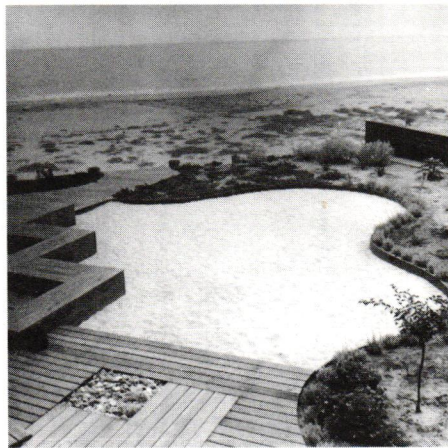
social content of the projects along with their formal analyses. However, the hidden point of these pieces may be that mid-20th-century modern landscape architects more readily adopted the forms than the philosophies of modernism. Further, the underlying implication of these essays may be that landscape architecture should not be compared to architecture, because its function and materials are fundamentally different from those of the “new technology” embraced by European modernist architects.

Treib’s book will be useful as a research tool for both students and professionals; its photographs and drawings assemble into a single volume material that was previously scattered or unavailable. But the book’s greatest value, beyond its presentation of historical material, is its social and philosophical examinations, which will provide a launching pad for landscape architects and architects who are contemplating new directions for their respective professions.

The work of the French modernists Gabriel Guevrekian and Pierre-Emile Legrain in the 1920s exemplifies that of designers who adopted the formal language of modernism rather than its social or philosophical content. Imbert discusses the French work in her essay, “A Model for Modernism: The Work and Influence of Pierre-Emile Legrain.” It also figures in Treib’s essay, “Axioms for a Modern Landscape Architecture,” Howett’s piece, “Modernism and American Landscape Architecture,” and Hunt’s contribution, “The Dialogue of Modern Landscape Architecture with Its Past.” Guevrekian’s *Jardin d’Eau et de Lumière*, or *Garden of Water and Light*, at the *Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes* in 1925, was revolutionary at the time in its departure from both traditional Beaux-Arts formality and naturalistic “informality,” but it was two-dimensional—or, as Imbert says, two-

and-a-half-dimensional, not quite making the leap into the third. Hunt labels Guevrekian’s work “an extreme example of that strange and widespread tendency to substitute modernism of graphic presentation for modernist content.” Both Treib and Howett conclude that even the adoption of cubism was limited to a reductive emphasis on form—as Treib describes it, “little utilized were the new lessons in space/time and integrated form that cubism had proposed”—and assess the work as having more emphasis on visual effect than on the kinesthetic experience of plastic and volumetric space espoused by the cubists and modern architects.

Nonetheless, the French work influenced American modern landscape architects—both the first generation (Fletcher Steele and Thomas Church) and the second (Eckbo, Rose, Kiley). The original source material by these designers included in the book greatly enhances the contemporary criticism presented. There are four pieces by Rose and several by Eckbo, Kiley, and Rose together—written from 1938 to 1940—reprinted in this book. Some of the writing is naive and seems dated, but must have provoked much discussion at the time, both at Harvard, where they all studied, and in the professional community at large. These designers’ search for



Beach House garden, Aptos, California; Thomas Church, 1949. (From *Modern Landscape Architecture*.)

a new approach to landscape design led them to explore the forms of modernism, and to reassess and experiment with traditional landscape materials. Most of their writing is concerned with formal issues and includes a thorough lambasting of the Beaux-Arts tradition.

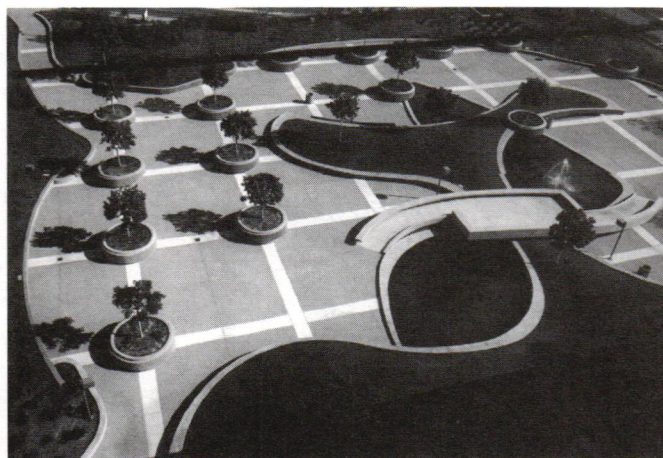
Science is introduced into the field for the first time in these essays, and, for Eckbo, Kiley, and Rose, it represents a step into the modern age and an opportunity for great change in humankind’s approach to the landscape. The essay “Landscape Design in the Urban Environment,” penned by the trio in 1939, scientifically quantifies the recreational needs of a modern city; a similar program is proposed in “Landscape Design in the Rural Environment” (1939). The quantifications (e.g., one preschool children’s playlot per thirty-to-sixty families; one single-acre children’s playground [for ages six to fifteen] per one thousand people; and so on, moving up in size and ratio) are typical of those adopted by the city and regional planning bodies throughout the 1960s.

The three landscape architects are quick to point out, however, that “quantity is not enough,” and go on to discuss quality—a landscape’s three-dimensional organization and types of activities to be accommodated (i.e., active or passive). Both essays introduce to landscape architecture the functionalism that modernism brought to architecture. Another essay by the three men, “Landscape Design in the Primeval Environment,” explores the balance between urban, rural, and “primeval” environments. Eckbo, Kiley, and Rose recognized the relevance of sciences—particularly the environmental and social sciences—to their profession, and used scientific methods (quantifying, naming, etc.) to gain legitimacy for their work. It is clear that they, perhaps for the first time, conceived of the landscape as a natural and cultural system in itself, not just a blank canvas for their

art. However, while such an approach does address the integration of humans and nature through the introduction of science, the designers' attitude toward the relationship remains, to a large degree, mechanical, separatist, and superior.

Howett's essay, "Modernism and American Landscape Architecture," provides an excellent overview and crystallizes the path that landscape architects should take through its exposition of where the profession has been. She concentrates on attitudes toward nature, from the 19th-century conception of nature as scenery, to Mies van der Rohe's and Le Corbusier's idea of nature as object or field (which, in spite of stylistic differences, bear a marked resemblance to one another). The idea that nature is to be *viewed*, that it is necessarily separate from humans and from architecture (which may be considered the signature of humans in the landscape), prevails in much of the writing and design work from the period she covers. Howett explores exceptions to this attitude, most notably Wright and Olmsted, both of whom set people in a cooperative rather than opposing stance toward their environments.

Howett shows how Wright's idea of a "regional style" becomes a response to an individual site. European modernists, quite taken with Wright's open plans, rejected his later work as idiosyncratic and site specific. They adopted the open plan as a typology, representative of a new way of living. Nature, however, did not come into play except as a contrast to architecture. (Interestingly, Howett points out that there was no study of landscape architecture at the Bauhaus.) Mies saw the true unity between architecture and nature as an ideal, rather than real, possibility, only achievable at a



Union Bank Square, Los Angeles, California; Garrett Eckbo, 1968.  
(From *Modern Landscape Architecture*.)

spiritual and philosophical level. Howett cites Mies:

Nature should also have a life of its own. We should avoid disturbing it with the excessive color of houses and our interior furnishings. Indeed, we should strive to bring Nature, houses, and people together into a higher unity. When one looks at Nature through the glass walls of the Farnsworth House it takes on a deeper significance than when one stands outside. More of Nature is thus expressed—it becomes part of a greater whole.

Ironically, the Farnsworth House is illustrated in Howett's essay with its blinds closed. Nature is presented as a separate entity, an object to look at. Such a perspective may increase our awareness of nature, but does not increase our comprehension of our place in it.

Olmsted's designs were based on a belief in the healing powers of broad expanses of unencumbered space and natural scenery. While his work follows the Romantic tradition (in which a series of designed landscape spaces were to be viewed sequentially, as paintings), it also placed humans in a position of reliance on nature, where their spiritual health depended on intimate and physical contact with nature. It is this direct, physical aspect that separates his work from that of the moderns—from, for example,

Mies and his view through the barrier/separation of a plate-glass window. Olmsted's idea—that the city was the site for true democracy, and that the park was where this could be most fully expressed—represented social emancipation of the type that one would expect from the modern movement. But, with the exception of the parks developed in Stockholm, Sweden, in the 1940s and 1950s, there do not seem to be any public spaces designed by modern landscape architects that are comparable to the urban parks Olmsted created in the mid- to late-19th century.

Like the work of Olmsted, the Stockholm approach to park design of the 1940s is based on the reintroduction of physical contact with nature into the lives of the inhabitants of the city. Thorbjorn Andersson's essay, "Erik Glemme and the Stockholm Park System," is valuable in part because it will be new material for many readers, but primarily because it discusses the design in terms of its political and social circumstances, and deals with public rather than private space. Conversely, most of the book's examples of early modern landscapes, illustrating the work of Eckbo, Kiley, Rose, Church, and Tunnard, are private, residential gardens of varying sizes (with few exceptions, such as Eckbo's camps for the Farm Security Administration)—which is unsurprising given that private grounds are commonly the venue for experimentation. In the postwar years, the American single-family suburban residence proliferated; the fact that many modernist precepts were about a new way of life, a new vision of society and its organization, may have seemed irrelevant to American practitioners at the time. The creation of private gardens for single-family, middle-class houses, or, later, for large corporate "estates," seems inconsistent with the original

social vision of the European modernists.

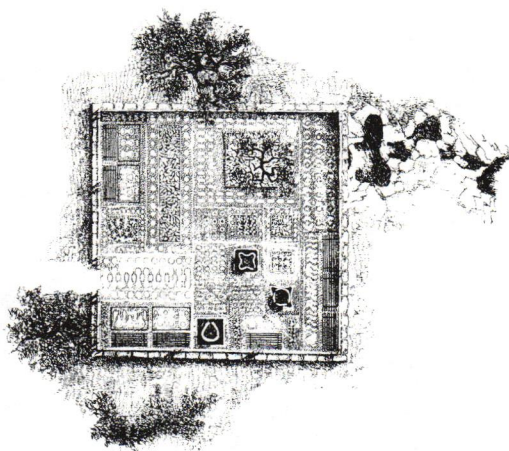
Sweden in the 1940s, writes Andersson, was amenable to exploring the social values of modernism on a broad-based level. After World War II, Sweden was in the process of becoming “a welfare state whose aim was to benefit the ordinary citizen.” The emphasis on the needs of the ordinary citizen contrasted with the urban parks of Olmsted, who focused primarily on the “education” of the lower classes and their “improvement” by exposure to the upper classes—which was to occur in the parks.

In Stockholm, park designers were concerned with modernist functionalism, which was “a gospel and a scheme for building a society.” The parks were to serve the people; the city was to be a democratic institution. Andersson includes in his essay the motto of the parks department in Stockholm:

The park breaks up the unrelenting flow of urban construction. Taken as a group, parks can form a network in the urban fabric that provides citizens with necessary air and light. They can create borders between different parts of the city and provide each district with an individual character and identity. The park offers to citizens of all ages space for recreation, for promenades and rest, for sport and play.

The park is a place in which to gather: for concerts, demonstrations, parties, dances, and even religious services. The park preserves both nature and culture: existing nature and newly created; old traces of culture as well as modern traditions.

In Stockholm, park designers took into account natural and human needs alike, creating a park system that introduced the beauties of the regional landscape into the urban environment—an approach that is not to be confused with the mindless re-creation of scenery that



Plan of the three cliff gardens in Vasa Park, Stockholm, Sweden; replanned by Erik Glemme, 1947. The small formal garden dramatizes its natural setting. The garden's floor is decorated with intricate stone patterns. (From *Modern Landscape Architecture*.)

was typical of many late-Romantic gardens and parks (whose designs followed the form but not the philosophies of Olmsted's parks). Through the “listening” to place that was advocated by the Swedes—a listening to the possibilities of the site, while respecting and enhancing its existing characteristics—Swedish parks seem to integrate human needs, both physical and spiritual, into the environment, creating places that speak profoundly of Stockholm's social, physical, and natural circumstances.

John Dixon Hunt speaks of “meaning” as a critical issue in his essay, “The Dialogue of Modern Landscape Architecture with Its Past.” He asserts that modern landscape architects “abandoned meaning for medium,” retreating to matters of style, adopting the formal effects of other arts rather than the philosophies behind their manifestation. This approach, which does not develop a philosophical alliance to landscape based on its unique qualities, may have derailed the progress toward the creation of meaningful places. In Hunt's view, some of the most intriguing recent landscape designs “exploit locality,” in contrast to the work of the modernists. But this is not a new idea, recalling the work of Wright and Jens Jensen in the

Midwest.

The question of “meaning” enters all the essays in the book. If by this we mean the more complete understanding of a place that, in turn, contributes our understanding of the world and the universe beyond, as well as of our place in it, then clearly landscape architecture *can* make a contribution. Through the creation of places where people can consider and reconsider, ask questions and find clues about their relationship to the larger global and universal systems, landscape architects can play a part in reuniting humans and nature, and in bringing meaning back into daily life and experience.

I return again to Howett's essay:

As a new century approaches, we need to continue to search for an appropriate vision—grounded in philosophical, aesthetic, psychological, and ecological values—to guide the design of contemporary environments that allow us all to live more fulfilling lives, knowing ourselves and the places we inhabit more profoundly, more intimately and joyfully. The challenge to rethink the past and to explore alternative futures is our most important legacy from the modern movement; we may discover through that process, however, that we are building on an American tradition of ideas and images with continuing relevance in our own time.

The ever-evolving aspects of a place, both physical and cultural, make it necessary to keep “listening” to our environment, to allow for evolution and divergent interpretations of place. We must continue to search, to avoid complacency, and to reject style over thoughtful design. Only through serious consideration of the past as well as the present can designers create places of which people can feel a part, not apart, and able to discover a new sense of belonging, inhabiting, and dwelling.

MODERN LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE: A CRITICAL REVIEW, Mark Treib, editor, MIT Press, 1993, 289 pp., illus., \$45.00.

GLENN L. SMITH

## Grounds for Change: Major Gardens of the Twentieth Century

*William Howard Adams*

In *Grounds for Change: Major Gardens of the Twentieth Century* William Howard Adams explores 20th-century garden history, garden theory, and the identification of major garden designs. This is a timely subject for exploration, considering the relative lack of historical and theoretical attention given to 20th-century gardens and landscapes. Inherent in any discussion of this period is the shift from garden design to landscape architecture. Frederick Law Olmsted's creation of landscape architecture as a profession in 1863 is a singular event that began a shift from the conception of the garden as a private spatial amenity linked to grand residential architecture, to a broader, and often more public, view of "garden" as a "landscape" involving spaces with a reduced focus on architecture. The breadth of the social, political, and environmental changes in the 20th century, particularly in America, make this an immense subject for a single book. Adams has handled this expansive subject by choosing to remain predominantly within the bounds of the garden design and private space category.

The author refers interchangeably to works as landscape design, garden design, and garden art, and states that "the subject is broad enough to employ all these labels without going into distinctions." These distinctions, however, are of pivotal importance in understanding the transformation from "garden design" (the ideology of the private realm) to landscape architecture (the ideology of the public landscape realm). As in his previous garden history survey,

*Nature Perfected* (New York: Abbeville, 1991), Adams has crafted an erudite and poetically written history of the major characters and events leading up to and encompassing the 20th-century garden and landscape era. But his historical survey does not remain within the bounds of the implied focus of the book. Consequently, his expertly crafted historical survey of gardens and landscapes of the 20th century moves along a line between the two categories, begging for a more finely articulated distinction between the ideology of the two. If Adams had been consistent in his examination of gardens as a residential/private realm, there would be little question as to the book's comfortable fit within the genre of the expertly photographed garden book. Instead, he has attempted to connect gardens with broader issues; as a result, this historical survey moves not along a parallel track between the garden and the landscape ideology, but rather along perpendicular tracks that attempt to bridge the two. The bridge is often tenuously defined, but, nonetheless, man-

ages to carry the weight of historical detail and theoretical perspective.

The book is divided into two parts. The first part, "Grounds for Change," is a historical survey of 20th-century gardens and landscapes, and the second is a photoessay of twenty-four major projects. The history begins with discussions of early American estate gardens and the influences of Charles Platt, the self-taught American architect and garden designer. Interwoven within this critique are discussions of other leading figures, such as Frederick Law Olmsted, Gertrude Jekyll, and Edwin Lutyens, who were also instrumental in bringing a new vision of garden and landscape into the 20th century. The book provides an insightful discussion of architect Daniel Burnham's influence on city planning, wherein he created a new sense of civic landscape scale. While Adams makes no direct link between the estate garden and the City Beautiful movement, he provides enough historical background to inform readers of the expansion of landscape projects beyond the private-estate garden and into the public and



Naumkeag, Berkshire Hills, England; Fletcher Steele. (From *Grounds for Change*.)



The Cactus Garden at Huntington Botanical Garden, Pasadena, California; William Hertrich. (From *Grounds for Change*.)

civic realm of large-scale urban designs of the City Beautiful type.

One of the more interesting historical revelations is Adams' discussion of the Salon d'Automne in Paris, founded by Franz Jourdain and Anatole de Baudot in 1903. Adams states that "through their efforts, architecture eventually became a special section of the Salon, providing a forum for the exchange of experimental ideas between young architects, artists, and designers." The Salon provided a vehicle for the translation of cubist paintings into landscape. There is a strong parallel between these historical experiments and the "art as landscape" trends of the 1990s. Thus, Adams' book is a significant source of historical and theoretical grounding for an emerging contemporary landscape architectural design movement that is again reaching for inspiration within the world of art.

Adams' examination of the relationship between architecture and landscape is admirable. It is a timely topic and one in great need of attention in light of the "architecture as art object" and "landscape as art object" tendencies of design professionals in recent years. This discus-

sion reaffirms the historical road map that is essential in leading contemporary designers toward a greater unity of building and site, with examples such as Alvar Aalto's Villa Mairea (Noormarkku, Finland, 1937), Frank Lloyd Wright's Fallingwater (Bear Run Falls, Pennsylvania, 1937), and Luis Barragán's San Cristobal ranch (Mexico City, Mexico, 1967–69). It is a rarity to be reminded so succinctly of the historical connection between architecture and landscape architecture.

The author presents the work of landscape architects Garrett Eckbo, Dan Kiley, James Rose, and the guru of modern landscape architecture, Thomas Church, as one of the first pronounced connective rationales for the shift in emphasis from garden design to landscape architecture after the Great Depression. Adams points out that "Thomas Church recognized that the era of the grand, often vulgar estate garden in America was coming to an end aesthetically, culturally, and economically. The philosophy of the Beaux Arts or of the warmed-over Olmstedian principles of city planning had nothing to

offer the ubiquitous American backyard or the out-of-door life of California or Florida." Unfortunately, this crucial philosophical shift that so profoundly affected the physical expression of world landscapes, particularly in America, is not consistently reinforced in the book as grounds for understanding changes in the 20th-century garden and landscape. Further elaboration on factors that expanded the concept of landscape would have brought other key landscapes and landscape architects to the forefront. While the contributions of Eckbo, Kiley, and Rose are noteworthy and well documented, it is curious that the works of groundbreaking figures such as Lawrence Halprin and Paul Friedberg are absent from this discussion of 20th-century work.

This concise historical survey concludes with a reasonable gesture toward the possibilities of future landscapes related to technology. The electronic-communications age demands an integrative response from the design professions. Adams strongly states that he has "been struck by the refusal of the contemporary landscape architect to confront the 'Machine in the Garden.'" But perhaps this lack of technological landscapes is more attributable to global ideological gridlock than to professional disinterest or restraint. The ideology of 20th-century environmentalism and preservation maintains a powerful opposition to technology. The electricity-generating wind turbines that dot the foothills of central California are presented in the book's conclusion as an example of technology and landscape synthesized, creating "new symbols of possibility." As in much of the book, however, the photographic images are lacking to support such arguments. The conclusion of the text seems to question rather than clearly assess landscape architecture's past as a road map toward its future possibilities.

Adams himself points out in the

book's preface that "the concept of an avant-garde working at the edge of, and fueling change in, an experimental ephemeral way doesn't serve this field of slow evolution, constrained by its symbiotic relationship with nature, a condition that does not pertain to the other arts." So, again, it is perhaps not the landscape architect's refusal to confront technological links but simply the slow evolution away from the dominant nature- or environment-oriented ideology. Beyond the profession, the general public maintains a nature/environment concept of landscape that strongly dictates what is acceptable design expression. The wind-turbine project is a questionable example of technology as landscape architecture. The Seattle Freeway Park designed by Lawrence Halprin offers a much more subdued and compromising example of a symbiotic relationship between the technology of the freeway and automobile and the enduring values of landscape and nature. Other such examples of the mediation between landscape and technology exist, and their inclusion in the book would have provided more solid ground for arguments for or against the future of the profession based on technology. In this regard, Adams' vision of the future of landscape architecture does not cohesively connect with the well-crafted pieces presented in his historical survey.

The second part of the book contains twenty-four projects handsomely photographed by Everett H. Scott. Adams provides a thorough and informative descriptive text for each project. Unfortunately, most of the projects are not directly referenced in the text of the historical survey, and the lack of connection is often confusing. And while at least half or more of the projects will be recognizable to landscape architects, architects, and other designers, the project-selection process is unclear and, in some cases, curious. The Cactus Garden at the Huntington Botanical Gardens in Pasadena, California, for instance, pro-

vides one of the most intriguing and textural photographic studies in the book, yet, horticulturally, it contrasts strikingly to the predominance of formal-estate garden projects. Adams refers to the last project in the book, Monument Valley Navajo Tribal Park in Utah and Arizona, as a park of "natural beauty . . . translated into monumental garden." This is a poetic interpretation, but unlike most of the other non-estate projects, no connective reasoning binds this project and some others to the discussion of 20th-century history and theory. On the whole, the photography and accompanying essays are left adrift, without a vital link to the insightful historical survey.

*Grounds for Change* shines for providing a concise historical overview of the field. Academics will find it an enlightening journey through the development of gardens and landscapes in the 20th century. The book also provides a platform from which more detailed studies may be launched to fill the field's historical and theoretical void. Adams leaves us not with a clear path toward change, but with only a metaphor to suggest that grounds for change in the landscape architecture profession are individual, explorative journeys toward "new symbols of possibility" amidst an ever-shifting sea of ideologies.

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GROUNDS FOR CHANGE: MAJOR GARDENS OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY, William Howard Adams, photography by Everett H. Scott, Little, Brown and Co., 1993, 216 pp., illus., \$60.00.

WILLIAM LAKE DOUGLAS

## Gardens and the Picturesque

*John Dixon Hunt*

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The picturesque movement in garden design originated with the notion that landscapes could be created, in form as well as content, in much the same way as paintings are painted. This influence on the built environment reached its full expression in 18th-century England as a result of several factors, including the passion during this period for allegorical, mythological, and literary themes, and the popularity of such artists as Claude Lorrain, Nicolas Poussin, and Salvator Rosa, whose works illustrated these themes.

Through education and travel abroad (experienced personally on a "grand tour," or vicariously through the explorations and illustrated writings of others), the privileged and enlightened gentry became well acquainted with all aspects of classical cultures, Renaissance art, and historic architecture. Returning to their country estates in rural England, they displayed their wealth, power, assimilated knowledge, and intellectual sophistication in material ways. The architecture of both landscapes and buildings became the *tabula rasa* on which these interests could be displayed with broad, imaginative, and impressive strokes.

Because this period is so rich with expressions of creative energy, much scholarship has been devoted to its many different aspects. In garden history, an early milestone is Christopher Hussey's *The Picturesque: Studies in the Point of View* (1927) and his subsequent *English Gardens and Landscapes 1700-1750* (1967). Other works include the Dumbarton Oaks symposium papers, *The Pic-*

*turesque Garden and Its Influence Outside the British Isles*, edited by Nicolas Pevsner (1974); David Watkin's *The English Vision: The Picturesque in Architecture, Landscape, and Garden Design* (New York: Harper & Row, 1982); the anthology *The Genius of the Place: The English Landscape Garden 1620–1820*, edited by John Dixon Hunt and Peter Willis (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989); and Hunt's essay, "'Ut Pictura Poesis': The Garden and the Picturesque in England (1710–1750)" in *The Architecture of Western Gardens* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991). Adding to Hunt's scholarship in this area is his recent *Gardens and the Picturesque*, a work that "decodes" the images of the picturesque and traces the period's lingering influences on subsequent examples and theories of landscape design.

Those who examine this period in detail may offer different perspectives on its causes and effects and chart these influences into different expressions in subsequent years. (Watkin, for instance, devotes an entire chapter to "The Rococo and Chinoiserie Phase," and Hunt, in this work, ignores it altogether.) Yet there is universal agreement that this period in England is one of extraordinary significance for the way in which it assimilated and transformed previous design traditions; it is also recognized as a time of major advancement in theories and practices that would influence design from then onward. Few periods in the history of spatial manipulation can surpass the intellectual elegance, the architectural exuberance, and the beauty of this era's Castle Howard, Stowe, or Stourhead.

Therefore, an inquiry and analysis of this topic by the eminently qualified scholar John Dixon Hunt is both appropriate and welcome. *Gardens and the Picturesque* is a collection of seven essays (published between 1971 and 1990, one which appeared originally in Italian) and four previously unpublished lectures,

revised for this collection. "Together," the author notes in the preface, "they offer analysis of various moments in garden history, and specifically of the relationship of gardens, garden design, and garden theory to various cultural phenomena . . . the cult of the picturesque . . . traditions of verbal-visual parallels, allegorical imagery and other languages of descriptions, landscape painting, and paintings of gardens."

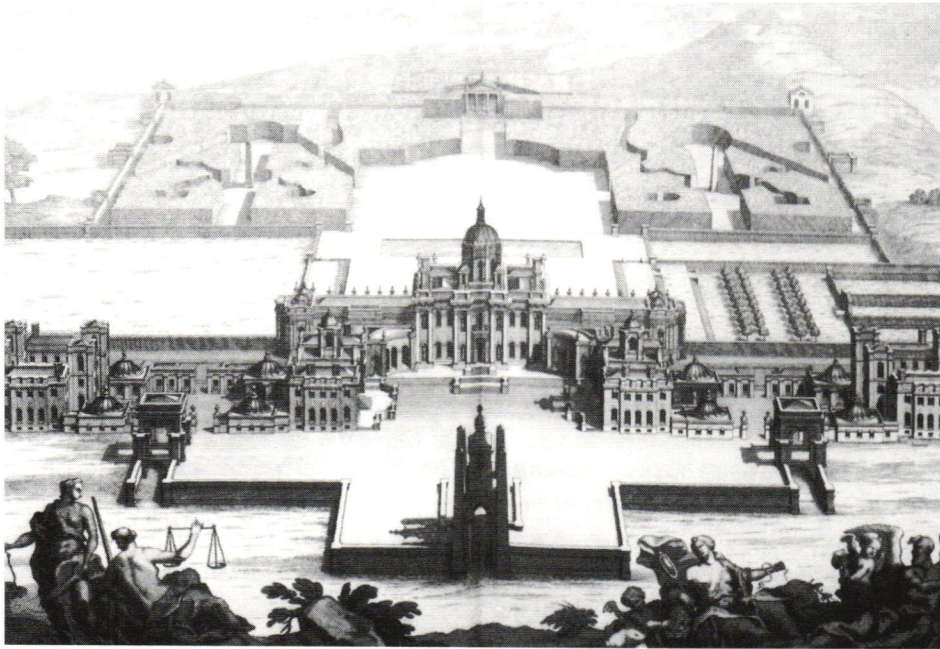
The essays are grouped into three parts: "Gardens, Words, Pictures"; "Pictures, Picturesque, Places"; and "Picturesque, Impressionism, Modernism." Unlike Watkin's approach, Hunt's essays are not a chronological statement of cause and effect. Rather, Hunt asks four major thematic questions, examined in varying degrees in each essay: How do humans "process" the physical world for consumption? How do gardens become "the most eloquent expressions" of complex cultural ideas? How does one culture translate inherited images and ideas from the past and shape them for present uses? How can one "read" a garden through the translation of its compositional "codes" into an understanding of its components and inspiration? All these themes are relevant in any analysis of the landscape—or, for that matter, any expression of the built environment. Certainly the picturesque and its influences on garden history are appropriate vehicles with which to explore these questions in detail. Written accounts, literary and allegorical references, and 127 black-and-white historical and contemporary illustrations illuminate Hunt's analyses and discussions.

The book's first section addresses English gardens in the 18th and early 19th centuries, with in-depth examinations of both specific projects (such as Castle Howard, Vauhall and Ranelagh, Stowe, Twickenham, and others) and designers (Alexander Pope, Humphrey Repton, and their contemporaries). While Hunt's rather straightforward

analysis of Castle Howard (in the first essay) is clearly articulated, speculations about Pope and his influences on English poetry as well as on gardens (in this section's third and fourth essays) are sometimes obscure and may require longer and more thoughtful consideration. This obscurity is based not so much on the language that Hunt uses (although it does pay to keep a good dictionary handy) as on the vocabulary of his ideas. Hunt assumes, for instance, that readers have a more-than-passing knowledge of English literature and classical history—which many simply do not. The author's capacity to draw threads of influences from diverse sources and tie them neatly together is the triumph of his analysis; it is also the tragedy of his work, because many who would benefit from knowing how previous design theories have assimilated cultural ideas into built forms are functionally illiterate in the areas of world literature, classical cultures, and intellectual scholarship that are the bases of Hunt's arguments. Ironically, Hunt himself notes this fact later in his work (in chapter ten), when he agrees with Stephen Krog's observation that landscape architecture is "a discipline in intellectual disarray, with a deficiency of theoretical discourse," and observes that "of all the modern arts, none has displayed such a meager command of analytical, including rudimentary philosophical, language as landscape studies."

The second section, "Pictures, Picturesque, Places," analyzes two recurring symbols of the picturesque—mirrors and ruins—and focuses on the writings of critic and commentator John Ruskin and the landscape paintings of J. M. W. Turner. In this discussion of two "practical aspects of the picturesque," Hunt suggests that the movement was an attempt to discover "fresh means of linking mental and emotional explanations to visual experiences." It was a period, he continues, "constructed of historical





Engraving of Castle Howard, from the third volume of Colen Campbell's 1725 work, *Vitruvius Britannicus*. (From *Gardens and the Picturesque*.)

and aesthetic doubleness: looking backward to traditional Renaissance modes of formulating experience as well as forward to our own private and purely formal expressions; looking to both visual and verbal languages, in old and new conjugations, for its proper dialect." By bringing Turner and Ruskin into his discussion about the picturesque and their impact on landscape design, Hunt demonstrates how, in both thematic and stylistic ways, the works of these men predict and prepare us for the periods that follow.

Finally, the last section, "Picturesque, Impressionism, Modernism," deals with artistic movements of the late 19th and early 20th centuries (such as impressionism and the proliferation of public parks) and how they were informed by picturesque notions of the past. For many readers, these last two essays may be the most interesting of the collection because they deal with more accessible and more easily understandable references. For instance, Hunt's essay "French Impressionist Gardens and the Ecological Picturesque" explores the modern movement of gardens as

revealed in the works of French impressionist paintings, a subject the author promises to expand later in book form. He shows how gardens, as illustrated by the artworks of this period, were the "battlegrounds, or at least proving grounds, where the rivalries of art and nature, of town and country, of social classes and of sexes, of past and present are acted out."

Hunt's last essay, "The Picturesque Legacy to Modernist Landscape Architecture," puts much of his previously articulated scholarship into the perspective of contemporary times. He notes how landscape scholarship on modern trends (such as Christopher Tunnard's *Gardens in the Modern Landscape* [1938], and Elizabeth Kassler's *Gardens and the Modern Landscape* [1964]) displays an ignorance of the past, and he identifies seven "simple truths about the late eighteenth century that have been wholly neglected by modernist writings." These "truths" explain how garden design moves from the end of the picturesque period into the "modern" consumer-based society with increasing emphasis in landscape design on form

and style rather than content and meaning. In the process, landscape design becomes, for Hunt, "blandly" uniform, driven by predictability, desire for acceptance, and general lack of individuality. He concludes that modern landscape architecture would benefit "if there was a more determined attempt to study and debate aesthetic questions," suggesting that we look at the truly vernacular gardens, such as the "immigrant gardens that Frances Butler has published, the backyards of rural Georgia blacks which Richard Westmacott is studying, or those creations of the Parisian *banlieue* about which Bernard Lassus wrote in *Les Jardins Imaginaires*." Until now, few landscape historians have been able to explain as convincingly as Hunt, from the historical perspective, why a comprehensive aesthetic understanding from the past to the present is crucial to creating modern landscapes of substance and significance.

This is an extraordinary collection of observations and theories, the full significance of which can only be appreciated upon a second (or fourth, or seventh) reading. Although the author claims that "this volume . . . offers itself . . . to students of landscape architecture," it is not, as mentioned before, a work for the casual reader or for the academic neophyte. In fact, a substantial background in the classics is almost needed to follow some of Hunt's discussions (and a reading knowledge of Latin and French wouldn't hurt either). Repeatedly, he draws connections among a multitude of sources, including literature, the visual and performing arts, mythology, scholarship, and intellectual and popular history (from Cicero to Gary Larson!), grounding his arguments in a variety of images, some known and some unknown.

Writing about John Ruskin, Hunt says that "his particular perspectives upon how we read or respond to buildings and scenery . . . though at times complicated, even long-winded, and contradictory, should not be missed by

students of landscape architecture, even if they have customarily neglected them.” While the first two of these admonitions might apply to *Gardens and the Picturesque* as well, Hunt’s essays are, nevertheless, academic banquets that can hardly be tasted (much less digested) in just one sitting. While initially daunting, the range and breadth of the author’s intellectual grasp of his subject is often stunning, and repeated efforts on the reader’s part will be well worth the rewards.

The picturesque movement in landscape history is of great intellectual significance, and also a period when human creative efforts in all the arts (literature, visual arts, music, theater, architecture, and garden design) often merged. And frequently, this merger was expressed in the garden. Hunt’s scholarship illuminates this creative expression and its subsequent influences with depth, authority, and comprehension. It may take Hunt’s audience years to fully absorb what he has presented here, yet this is a benchmark and a landmark against which other observations (in the picturesque as well as in other areas of garden scholarship and design history) might well be judged. *Gardens and the Picturesque* should illuminate the course scholars may take in future considerations of garden history, and, it is hoped, rectify the “deficiency of theoretical discourse” within the field of landscape architecture.

GARDENS AND THE PICTURESQUE, John Dixon Hunt, MIT Press, 1992, 300 pp., illus., \$35.00.

ROBERT SABBATINI

## Landscape Architecture: An Illustrated History in Timelines, Site Plans, and Biography

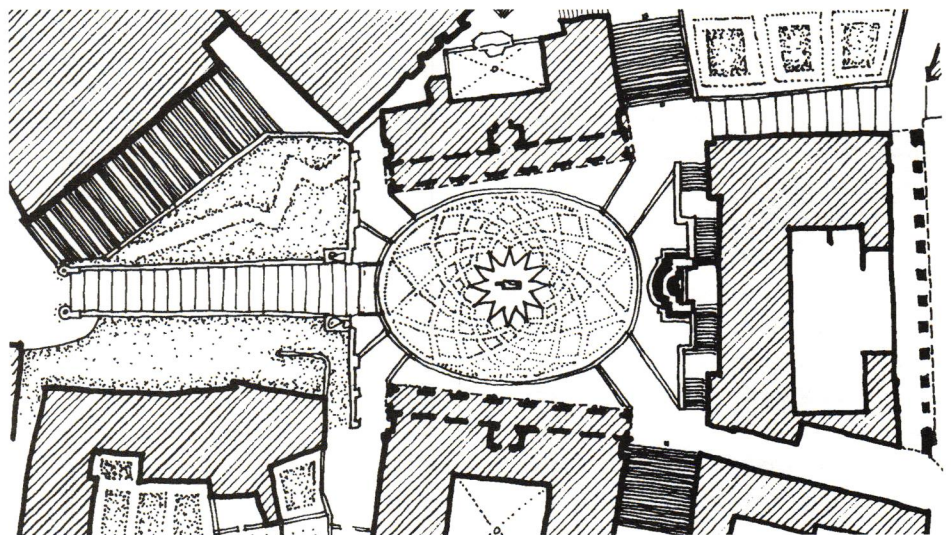
William A. Mann

When William Mann wrote *Space and Time in Landscape Architectural History* (first published by the Landscape Architectural Foundation in 1981), he began a journey that for most writers would be overwhelming in scope and effort. However, Mann not only completed this first book successfully, but proceeded to write an even more comprehensive work, *Landscape Architecture: An Illustrated History in Timelines, Site Plans, and Biography*, which encapsulates the history of landscape architecture and environmental design in numerous tables, plans, sketches, and text.

*Landscape Architecture* is extremely comprehensive. Its most significant chapters are “Timelines,” which contains a series of tables that display important works of landscape architecture in the

context of the political and economic, social, and technological achievements of their times; “Outline of Landscape Architectural History,” which provides an overview of historic events in landscape architecture, from prehistoric to contemporary times; “Maps of Major Works of Landscape Architecture,” which identifies the locations of major works of landscape architecture throughout Europe and the United States; “Design Plan Drawings,” which illustrates over one hundred of the most important historical works of environmental design; and “Biographical Sketches,” which presents brief accounts of more than two hundred and eighty people important to the development of landscape architecture and environmental design.

Mann wrote this book primarily for landscape architecture and environmental design students to help them visualize the interrelated aspects of this broad, often misunderstood, and ill-defined profession. The publication is clearly academic in orientation and serves best as a reference book primarily for students, as Mann intended. The timelines were meant to place important works of environmental design in the context of other significant events of their time. Historical events are not isolated but are linked



Piazza del Campidoglio, Rome, Italy; Michelangelo, 1537. (From *Landscape Architecture*.)

to and are often manifestations of important social and political movements. For example, the development of the great parks of New York and Boston occurred during eras of great social reform that sought to remedy the ills of urban society. Unfortunately, the large amount of detail contained in the tables often overwhelms the author's ability to convey this information in a simple and straightforward manner.

A complement to the presentation of timelines, the chapter "Outline of Landscape Architectural History" distills significant accomplishments in environmental design. In outline format, the author briefly describes important aspects of each historical period, setting forth the social context as well as cultural and design characteristics of the period. This is not a chapter one would read on a Sunday afternoon. Rather, the outline serves as a reference and starting point for understanding the historical development of the landscape and environmental design profession.

*Landscape Architecture* perhaps best serves the reader in the chapter that contains design plan drawings. Each ground plan, personally prepared by the author, depicts important environmental design works in hand-drawn, to-scale plans. More than one hundred in number, the works range from prehistoric Stonehenge to Michelangelo's 16th-century Piazza del Campidoglio in Rome, to contemporary works such as Thomas Church's Donnell Residence (Sonoma County, California, 1948) and the SWA Group's Williams Square (Las Colinas, Texas, 1980). A consistently formatted but overly complicated graphic scale accompanies each plan, depicting lineal and area measurements in both imperial and metric scales. The author's drawings provide a comprehensive overview that allows readers to make spatial comparisons among a wide range of works. The ground plans will help students to develop an understanding of spatial form; they will also aid practitioners in

the often difficult task of explaining spatial form to clients.

Although *Landscape Architecture* is comprehensive in scope, it lacks sophistication in its graphic format. The author's message would be well served by a collaborative effort with a graphic designer because the book's contents are often not portrayed in a manner inviting to the reader. This is especially true of the chapters "Timelines" and "Outline of Landscape Architectural History," which tend to be overwhelming in content and lacking in clarity. Also, with the increasing availability of computer graphics, it would be valuable if diskette versions of the plan drawings accompanied forthcoming editions of *Landscape Architecture*. This would offer even greater application of the author's work as it would allow landscape architects and urban designers to freely manipulate images and to superimpose them on their own works to facilitate scale comparisons.

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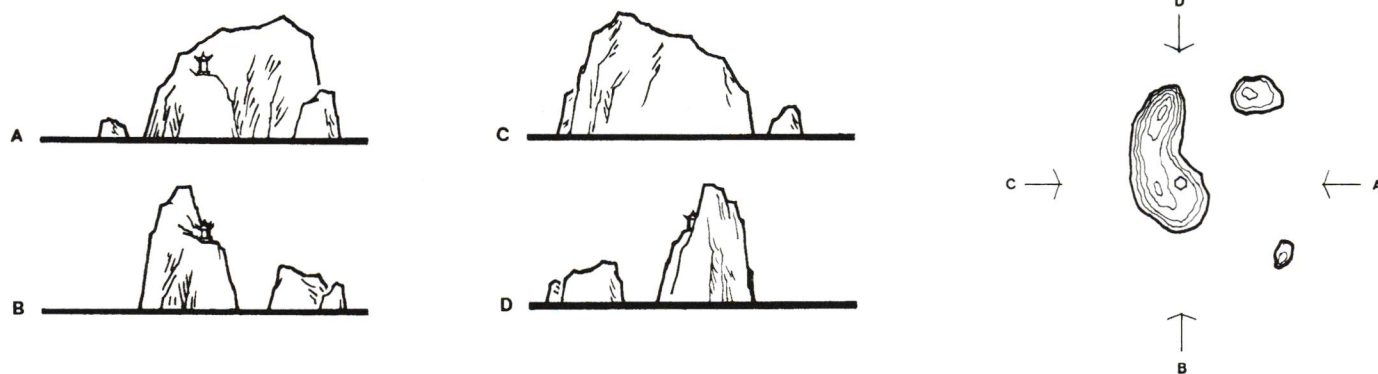
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE: AN ILLUSTRATED HISTORY IN TIMELINES, SITE PLANS, AND BIOGRAPHY, William Mann, John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1993, 461 pp., illus., \$39.95.

JOSEPH C. WANG

## Chinese Gardens

Chinese classical gardens are currently enjoying unprecedented popularity and acceptance. Gardens simulating traditional Chinese forms have been built in almost every corner of the globe, and many new books on Chinese gardens have been published recently. While printed material on the subject abounds, few books go beyond merely describing the Chinese garden and venture into the realm of the "whys" and "hows" of its creation.

The lack of fresh perspective is unsurprising given the relatively limited number of well-preserved, notable gardens in China today. It would be difficult to uncover new findings or insights using a "standard" bibliography, such as those found in Maggie Keswick's *The Chinese Garden: History, Art, and Architecture* (New York: Rizzoli, 1978), Edwin Morris' *The Gardens of China* (New York: Scribner's, 1983), or David Engel's *Creating a Chinese Garden* (London: Croom Helm, 1986)—despite the fact that works such as these include extensively conducted field observations. Personal experience in the design of Chinese gardens also plays an important part of any significant study of the subject. For example, *Yuan Yeh*, or *The Craft of the Gardens* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), is in essence a summation of Ji Cheng's lifelong experience in garden design and building. A highly respected artist and garden designer of the late 16th and early 17th centuries, Ji Cheng published *Yuan Yeh* in 1631; it is perhaps the single most important treatise on garden design in Chinese history, despite the fact that none of his gardens have survived to this day.



One garden scene viewed from different perspectives. (From *Landscape Design in Chinese Gardens*.)

Most contemporary landscape scholars are primarily observers of or writers about garden or building phenomena, as opposed to practitioners. One exception is Sun Xiao-xiang, a professor at Beijing University. A scholar and a designer, he proposed in a 1982 article, entitled “Landscape Artist-Scholar’s Gardens of Jiangsu,” a three-level approach to the study of classical Chinese gardens—in particular, the private gardens of southeastern China. First, gardens, as settings for a good life, involve pragmatic concerns for bringing elements of nature into the home’s extended “living rooms,” where fresh air and sunlight are abundant, where guests are entertained and children play. Reflective of the owner’s appetite and appreciation for an artistic life, such a garden can be studied according to its level of comfort and visual beauty. Second, most Chinese gardens were inspired by natural landscapes, and designed in the same manner as landscape paintings were created. Often, the owner-designer was an artist in his own right. The gardens in this category are the product of artistic endeavors and, as such, can be analyzed by a set of principles derived from art, which correspond to the syntactic dimension of creative arts and design.

The third criterion is the semantic level at which gardens reflect and embody the ideals of their creators or owners. The garden designer may strive to convey an ideal romance, a lifelong

ambition (perhaps unfulfilled), an unyielding integrity, or wishes for a utopian world. The gardens in this category embody subtle, intangible ideas that are more commonly conveyed in poetry and art. Such attributes or meanings may not be easily interpreted, and a full appreciation of the garden would require a high level of sophistication and scholarship on the part of the beholder. A thorough understanding of the historical and cultural background surrounding the development of the garden is a prerequisite for enjoying gardens of this type.

In design terms, these levels should not suggest a progression along which one moves from pragmatic needs, through artistic manipulation, to an ultimate manifestation of physical forms rich in the ideals and aspirations of its creator. Instead, these levels are used as criteria for grouping gardens into “the good life,” “the inquisitive intellect,” and “the transcendental scholar,” for the enjoyment of the owner-gardener and for serious studies by the designer-scholar. The same approach can be used to review books on Chinese gardens.

*Landscape Design in Chinese Gardens* by Frances Tsu is a delightful book that is well written and illustrated with black-and-white photographs and high-quality line drawings. While the chapters “Creating Spaciousness in Limited Area” and “Design for Dynamic Viewing: Four Seasons and Five Senses” contain the

book’s most charming and effective discussions, “Historical Perspective,” “Comparisons of the Chinese and European Gardens,” and “Comparison of the Chinese and Japanese Gardens” are the most informative chapters because they offer insights not readily found in other sources. The organization of the book, however, is rather conventional: for example, section headings are predictable—“General View,” “Components,” and “Design Process and Essence.”

The “Components” section—which discusses, for example, the molding of hills, manipulation of rocks, management of water, as well as various architectural elements such as courtyards, bridges, and fenestration—is the weakest because it regurgitates information that is better presented elsewhere (in Liu Dun-zhen’s *Chinese Classical Gardens of Suzhou*, for instance). It is as if Tsu felt that a book that did not include discussions about hills and water and the like would not be considered a “good” book on Chinese gardens. Nevertheless, *Landscape Design in Chinese Gardens* is a useful contribution to the field, and its author more than achieves her goal, which she states in the preface, to “enhance garden lovers’ enjoyment of Chinese gardens by showing them how to observe with ‘educated eyes.’” She successfully conveys her joy and love for her subject throughout her book, inspiring readers to join in the good life of the garden.

Perhaps the most up-to-date and comprehensive book on Chinese gardens is R. Stewart Johnston's *Scholar Gardens of China*. Although the book's many sketches are stylistically inconsistent in some cases, they are generally beautiful and informative. Judging from the illustrations (which include abundant black-and-white photographs and eight pages of color plates) and the breadth and density of information included, the book appears to be the result of several years of careful research. The author shares with readers wisely selected consultations with authorities on scholar gardens, giving admirable attention to details. Most impressive is the chapter "The Designers and Builders of Gardens," in which Johnston vividly and effectively characterizes individual participants in garden design (for example, the scholar, architect-gardener, master builder/craftsperson, planter, and geomancer) and the functioning of the design coalition as a whole. Equally noteworthy is the inclusion of several clan gardens in Donsham, Jiangsu Province; the "Lingnan" gardens of South China; a salt merchant's house and garden in the Sichuan Province; and the "library garden houses," a vernacular commonly found in the Guangdong Province. The library garden house, often a second home to masters of well-to-do households, is "an environment conducive to study and contemplation." Their unique tranquillity and repose provide a refreshing contrast to the residential prototype of the Suzhou gardens, also covered in the volume, which are larger in scale and serve as settings for everyday life.

Throughout *Scholar Gardens of China*, Johnston provides a strong sense of the contexts within which the gardens exist—be it the neighborhood, the village, or the surrounding urban fabric. For instance, he draws from a map of Chang'an, "Going up River at the Qingming Festival" (a 12th-century painting of the city of Kaifeng by Zhang Zed-

uan), and a stone map of Suzhou during the Song Dynasty (sculpted in 1229 by Lu Yen), to speculate on the construct of Jun Pu Yan, the private living quarters and garden of the city governor, and its urban context. Although Johnston may have miscalculated scale and dimension, his efforts are admirable.

Johnston's garden analyses, which focus on the placement of objects and the organization of space and movement, are surprising given his background in architecture and urban design. While his arguments are supported by intriguing sketches and diagrams of garden plans, they still rely heavily on verbal descriptions of the spaces and of the experiences within them. For example, his analysis of Liu Yuan (Lingering Garden, 1522) is reminiscent of a 1963 article by Kuo Tai-heng and Chang Tsin-chiu about the same garden, which, with its extensive use of lyrics, has since become a model for analyzing Chinese gardens.<sup>1</sup> There is an overriding emphasis on spatial analyses of the more than forty gardens examined in the book. But while *Scholar Gardens of China* is no less successful than other, similar endeavors, readers still need to keep in mind that

graphics are not analyses, despite their usefulness in providing mental garden tours.

Johnston's book is superb, although it can be improved if, for example, the following suggestions are taken into account in future editions: the Chinese term *pen jing*, or "potted landscape," is more appropriate for this book than the word *bonsai*, its Japanese equivalent; there are some errors in translation, such as "Ou Yuan," which means "Twin Garden," not "Casual Garden" (Frances Tsu makes a similar mistake in *Landscape Design in Chinese Gardens*); and, in some cases, the purpose of redrawn sketches, based original sources, is questionable. Although Johnston states that the line drawings were "prepared by the author, based on material from Chinese sources but developed to include information from on-site observation and interpretation," the sketches of Liu Yuan appear to be faithful duplications of the originals, without any modifications.

*Scholar Gardens of China* also features chapters on the Suzhou classical tradition and on city gardens. But no matter how informative and elegant the narratives and illustrations, they fail to

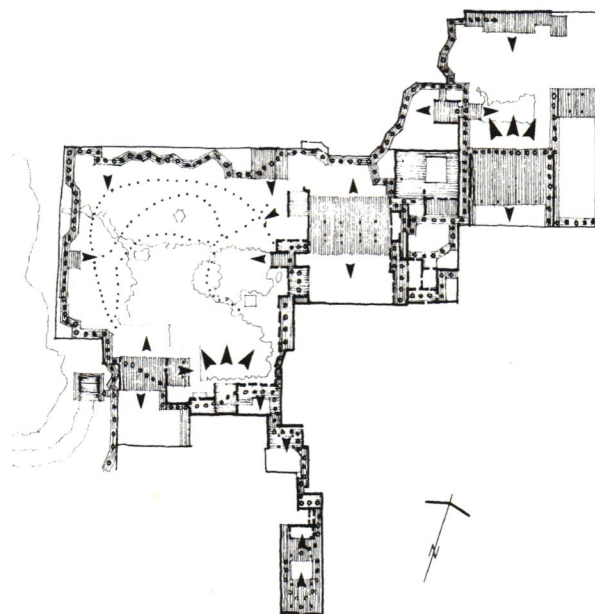


Diagram of viewing points and movement patterns at Liu Yuan (Lingering Garden), Suzhou, Jiangsu Province; 1522. (From *Scholar Gardens of Suzhou*.)



Section of Liu Yuan (Lingering Garden), including two-story pavilions, a “five-peak celestial house,” and a “fresh-breeze pool-house.” (From *Chinese Classical Gardens of Suzhou*.)

surpass the richness and authenticity of coverage of the same contents in Liu Dun-zhen’s *Chinese Classical Gardens of Suzhou*, originally published in 1979 by the People’s Republic of China’s Building and Architecture Press, and recently released in English by McGraw-Hill.

The idea for the Liu’s book was planted almost forty years ago when he began a systematic survey of Suzhou gardens. Under his direction, a team of fourteen researchers continued the study for over twenty years, and produced meticulous measured drawings of fifteen Suzhou gardens, selected from an original list of over three hundred gardens of all sorts. Never before have Suzhou gardens been so thoroughly documented, and these drawings—precise, exquisite, informative—have become the authority and standard for all subsequent studies on the subject.

The first part contains discussions on the theory and methods of garden design, including topics such as layout, buildings, water, rocks, flowers, and trees. The second part provides detailed descriptions and critiques of fifteen Suzhou classical gardens. In the original Chinese publication, the second part contains 172 measured drawings of excellent quality, and 661 black-and-white photographs of gardens taken between 1960 and 1963, many of which have not survived the country’s upheavals. For this reason, the book is of great archival value.

The 1993 English-language version

of the book suffered a 20 percent reduction in size, a 35 percent cut in the number of illustrations, and the quality of its printing is generally inferior to that of the original. Nevertheless, it is a landmark book that makes accessible to a wider audience examples of gardens that flourished more than one thousand years ago, and explanations of the social and cultural contexts from which they grew.

Although Liu’s intention was to produce a how-to book on Chinese classical gardens, his book contains far more than design procedures and construction techniques. It provides profound discussions on design theory and principles, thorough and vivid delineations of the histories of the gardens, and thoughtful critiques on those historical gardens from the viewpoint of a scholar and designer. Some of the elegance and richness of the original text may have been lost in the translation process but much care seems to have been taken to preserve its meaning, clarity, and the cultural character of this monumental work.

Of the three books under discussion, Tsu’s *Landscape Design in Chinese Gardens* is the most charming, unpretentious, and friendly, promoting gardens as settings for a good life in general and arousing interest in Chinese garden art in particular. Because Johnston’s *Scholar Gardens of China* touches on issues of rationality, structure, and process, it will appeal to inquisitive intellectuals. Liu’s *Chinese Classical Gardens of Suzhou* fulfills

all of the categories of the three-level model for evaluating Chinese gardens and books, is a recommended addition to the libraries of any landscape scholar or designer.

Today, the invasion of China’s architectural scene by the postmodern movement is creating controversy and debate over the country’s cultural tradition and future. Westernization and modern interpretations of traditions have dominated the Chinese cityscape since the late 1970s; curricula at architecture schools are undergoing similar reforms, while attempting to retain a Chinese structure. In this torrent of change, Chinese classical gardens have remained constant and stable, as evidenced by the number and quality of classical gardens being reconstructed in China and abroad, and of the recent publications on the subject. Can the stability of this garden form be attributed to its utilitarian value as a symbol of Chinese tradition, which some find necessary in the midst of a fast-changing (architecturally and otherwise) modern China? Or is it because its enduring virtues have made it impervious to foreign influences? Clues for answers may be found in the books reviewed here.

#### NOTES

1. Kuo Tai-heng and Chang Tsin-chiu, “An Analysis of the Spatial Composition of Liu Yuan,” *Jianzhu* (March 1963).

LANDSCAPE DESIGN IN CHINESE GARDENS, Frances Tsu, McGraw-Hill, 1988, 224 pp., illus., \$34.95.

SCHOLAR GARDENS OF CHINA, R. Stewart Johnston, Cambridge University Press, 1991, 331 pp., illus., \$155.00.

CHINESE CLASSICAL GARDENS OF SUZHOU, Liu Dun-zhen, China Architecture and Building Press and McGraw-Hill, 1993, 459 pp., illus., \$65.00.

SPENCER PARSON

## Italian Villas and Gardens: A corso di disegno

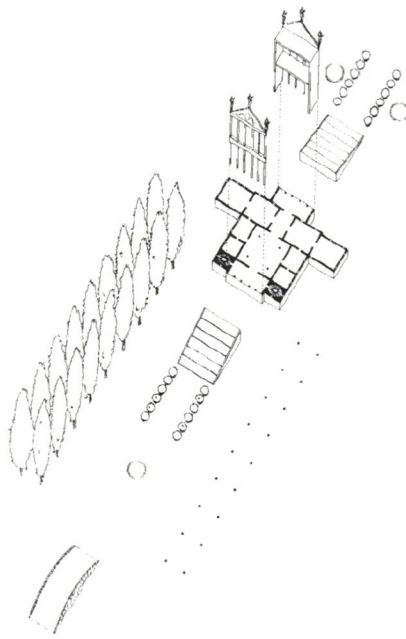
*Paul van der Ree, Gerrit Smienk,  
and Clemens Steenbergen*

Ever since the city was invented, its creators have continually sought ways to escape from their great invention. Consequently, the history of Western civilization has been well supplied with instructions on how to cultivate the countryside. Among the most notable have been essays and treatises by Cicero, Seneca, Ovid, Vitruvius, and, perhaps most celebrated of all, the letters of Pliny the Younger, which contain explicit instructions for the design of an ideal pastoral retreat. The city and the countryside, the built and the unbuilt world, Jerusalem and Eden, describe twin polarities of the human psyche. Between these twin conditions lies the garden, where tensions engendered seek resolution. Because it is the most ephemeral of all artifices, the most subject to change and reinterpretation, the garden becomes essentially an index to a state of mind. By the record it leaves, the history of Western culture may be observed and absorbed.

Undoubtedly, the most extensively described example of this phenomenon has been the 16th-century Italian garden. The topic has been so well documented that every enthusiast must by now consider him- or herself to be something of an expert. It is therefore somewhat surprising to find that it is presented to us once again in *Italian Villas and Gardens*. The question posed by this new entry is, Why should we pay attention to, or what can possibly remain unexamined, in this admittedly provocative subject?

The authors of this book, Paul van der Ree, Gerrit Smienk, and Clemens Steenbergen, appear to have asked themselves this same question. They immediately stipulate in the foreword that their book is not merely another survey of either the Italian villa or its gardens. Nor is their emphasis horticultural or historical. Instead, their aim is to present insights into the Italian villa and garden that have never before been drawn; to reveal their subject to be as it essentially is—an act of design—and to dissect each example offered, piece by piece, probing with words and illustrations, the structural, spatial, and experiential relationships that exist between house, garden, and landscape in forty-five Renaissance villas. Their fundamental purpose is to demonstrate how, through the application of a similar set of formal and visual rules, each villa has been organized into a coherent and memorable place. They wish to present a book in which their entire set of analyses constitutes a form of lesson-plan. And to confirm their intentions, the authors have subtitled their work *A corso di disegno*.

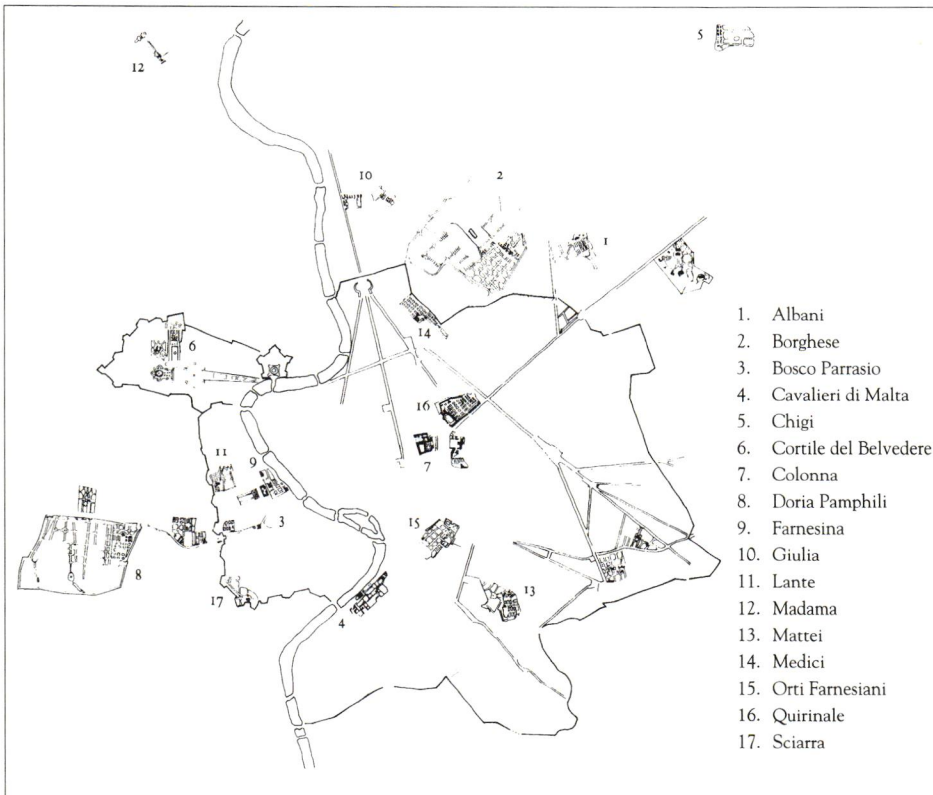
More could be said to advertise this



Exploded axonometric of Villa Cornaro, Veneto; Andrea Palladio, 1551–90. (From *Italian Villas and Gardens*.)

book's ambitions. But this much at least suggests that this latest offering indeed merits the close attention of the design profession and promises a much-needed and useful emphasis that is only rarely available in publications of this type. Some may recall Hamilton Hazlehurst's valuable work, *Gardens of Illusion* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1980), a book with similar ambitions, that surveys the gardens and parks of André Le Nôtre in order to focus on the artist's optical manipulation of relationships between building and landscape.

To realize the significance of the author's objectives, the reader has only to glance at the illustrations provided. The usual plans, engravings, and photographs that accompany most publications on this subject have been supplemented by an impressive variety of original line drawings that depict the interactions between the various villas and their landscaped settings. Most appear like those that are produced, or could be produced, in many architectural schools today. Almost every drawing technique is displayed—both two- and three-dimensional diagrams, exploded axonometric views of an entire villa or a portion of a building, cross-sectional drawings through vast landscapes and small gardens—all carefully presented to illuminate the text. Readers who overlook the acknowledgments, which identify the authors as architects and landscape architects, may already anticipate from the visual evidence provided a discussion about architectural matters. These prove to be matters of some complexity. It becomes evident, for example, that the unique character of each villa is established not simply by the use of a similar set of formal rules but by the interactions between this design system, the villa program, and the idiosyncrasies of a particular site and terrain. Moreover, it may at first appear that villa design was an essay in regulating different local conditions with a set of similar formal instruments. But it is ultimately the nec-



Plan and index of villas in Rome. (From *Italian Villas and Gardens*.)

essary deformation of these rules that absorbs our attention, and that explains the variety in drawing technique, which allows the differences among the villas to emerge.

This is not to say that, in their pursuit of design issues, the authors ignore either the culture that produced these places or the particular history behind each of them. Indeed, the book opens with a discussion of the cultural ideal of rural life, a notion that is rooted, as suggested earlier, in classical Rome, and that finds its first 15th-century manifestation in the Tuscan villa. Further to the south, Rome produced its own version of this ideal with the *villa urbana*. Reflecting the accumulation of wealth and the search for status by Vatican pontiffs, the ideal took the form of spacious country estates, nested in the hills that surround the city. By the term “urban villa,” the authors remind that country life was not seen as a critique or denial of the city, but rather a retreat from the fatigue and obligations that

accompanied urban life in the *quattrocento*. Moreover, it was only from the more distant position offered by this new condition—situated between the city and undisturbed nature—that a humanist elite could contemplate urban culture while enjoying the sensuous pleasures of nature.

However, little more is offered in this introductory section to explain developments in either the plan or form of this new country house. Instead, it is suggested that any developments in the villa type occurred as a result of changes in the way nature was understood and represented in the art and architecture of the early Renaissance. As events unfold, “the Renaissance villa substitutes the sensuous pleasure of tangible nature for the symbolic medieval representation of worldly paradise.” The influence exerted on these events by the field of philosophy, most particularly by such figures as Marsilio Ficino, Pico della Mirandola, and Bernard Telesio, greatly contributed to the shift in thought. But it was Leon

Battista Alberti who stated in mathematical terms the neo-platonist idea of the imitation of nature; who formulated the mathematical interpretation of nature in artistic terms; and who undoubtedly did the most to provoke a new “aesthetic” for the Tuscan and Roman villa. Relationships between architecture and nature could now be resolved within a rational scheme of dimensions and proportions. And with the assistance of scientific perspective, which reduced external reality to a mathematical order, the position of building and garden within the surrounding landscape could be determined with a new sense of certainty. The total landscape had finally been placed under the control of the human intellect.

In order to explore both the similarities and differences among such a large collection of places, the authors must rely on typological methods. It is initially proposed that the Renaissance villa was something more than a house: “The villa as an object consists of a composition of buildings and gardens. The casino is the actual house or garden house.” It was also defined by a collection of elements—loggia, pergola, terrace, parterre, secret garden, grotto, cascade—that were arranged in a specific sequence within the garden. Design detail in each element varied from villa to villa, and some would appear and some would not, as a matter of both choice and necessity. But it was always in the garden, and always by the number and sequence of these typological pieces, that differences in interaction between villa and landscape were established and that the *integrazione scenica* of the villa into the landscape was achieved.

It is at this point that the complexities first suggested by the illustrations are progressively confirmed by a text that becomes a detailed record not only of the typological relationships that exist between villas, but of how “the actual positioning of the disparate and



autonomous components can be used actively and on different levels to involve the local topography of the plan.” As the authors’ lesson-plan itemizes the often complex relationships among these components, readers are required to pay extremely close attention, especially when an understanding of the lessons depends on the comparative analysis of two or three villas simultaneously. Following the analyses can lead to extreme fatigue on the reader’s part. However, for those design professionals, scholars, and enthusiasts to whom this book appears to be directed, the critical workout required will prove to be rewarding, for it is ultimately through such a close reading of both text and illustrations that the benefits of this *corso di disegno* are disclosed.

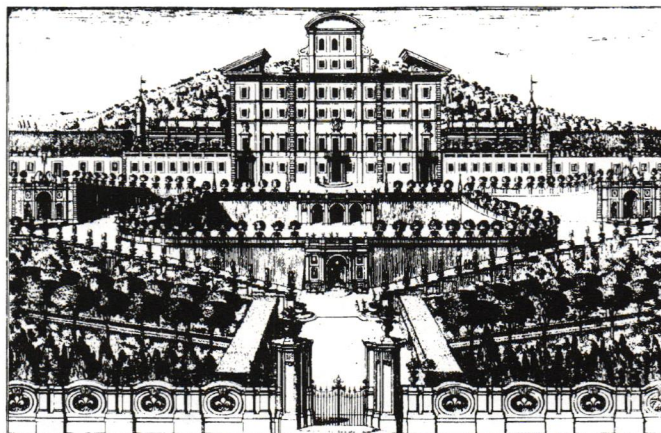
The material in this book has been further classified geographically, according to the regions in which villas are located: Tuscany, Rome, the Roman countryside, Frascati, and northern Italy. This strategy has several ramifications. It allows the authors to clarify the question of regional influence on the development of the villa. Simultaneously, the book may serve as a guide for those who may wish to visit the villas of a particular region. Many will therefore appreciate that each regional segment is introduced by a diagrammatic map that locates all the villas in the region. Others will be pleased to find in each segment a detailed discussion of the topographical characteristics of each region and their influence on local villas; or to find that these short essays extend the authors’ earlier discussion of the history of the villa type to include the cultural expression of a region. And those who are less inclined to protracted challenges will welcome the fact that this organization allows them to approach the book in successive phases, region by region.

Most of the villas in this book have appeared in other publications. Readers will inevitably find some that are known (v. Aldobrandini), some that are vaguely known (v. Crivelli), and some that are legendary (v. Lante). Among those that are less known, it is to the authors’ credit that they have included in the segment on Tuscany such villas as Bombici, Castelli, and Petraia; in their segment on the Roman countryside they have included such villas as Catena and Chigi-Albana; and the Frascati segment includes the Villa Lancelotti—“a model for the basic plan of the other Frascati villas”—and the outsized Villa Mondragone, whose 365 rooms celebrate the introduction of the Gregorian calendar and whose sectional condition appears to be equally inspired.

By most standards, to rescue villas that have received limited attention to date should be sufficient reason to look at this book. But more impressive is the authors’ ability to sustain our interest in Villas that are by now well known. We think particularly of the Villa Medici in Rome, which reveals a condition of unexpected complexity, with an urban palace to the south, and a *villa suburbana* to the north; the set of splendid terraces at the Orti Farnesiani, also in Rome, for which vivid drawings and text reconstruct the experience of moving through a “complex architectural

tableau”; and the entire series of Palladio’s villas of the Veneto, where the authors’ typological analysis excels (although the disappointing omission of the Villa Foscari goes unexplained). But they do provide, admirably, a discussion of the *sacro bosco* (sacred forest) at Bomarzo, a thoroughly enigmatic and labyrinthine landscape that has received considerable publicity since its curiosities were uncovered by Salvador Dali in 1949. Physically, it is removed from any city; spiritually, it is equally aloof and more than slightly iconoclastic in character. We are told that, unlike the Orti Farnesiani and others in this book, Bomarzo “presents a visual and fluid portrayal of a world that criticized the Renaissance concept of hierarchy and order.” Thus, we suspect that its current notoriety is due, at least in part, to the antithesis that it offers. This is pursued in detail by the authors’ insights into the garden’s unworldly character and their photographs of its arresting objects and icons. And in the absence of any visible order—the customary grid or other geometric gestures—we are grateful for the authors’ account of the apparent thematic order that serves as a mental scaffold for Bomarzo’s iconography. Much still remains to be explained about this inscrutable landscape. The lesson of this particular analysis lies in its reminder of how design can control the visitor’s experience; how invention can be used to provide surprise, incite awe, create mystery, or titillate the imagination.

The authors’ description of the esoteric world that Vicino Orsini began in 1550 could never be fully understood without the influence of their illustrations and, in particular, their impeccable axonometric of the entire Bomarzo site. By this key illustration and its detailed index we can follow all elements and spatial events described in the text. The same



Villa Aldobrandini, Frascati; Giacomo della Porta, 1598.  
(From *Italian Villas and Gardens*.)



Sacro Bosco di Bomarzo, Roman countryside; Vicino Orsini, began in 1550. (From *Italian Villas and Gardens*.)

can be said about many other villas that we encounter, such as the villas Farnese, Catena, Pratolino, and, in particular, the Villa Medici at Fiesole. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said of others, such as the villas d'Este, Crivelli, and Aldobrandini, where the many elements of the garden cannot be identified on the plan; or a crucial drawing is too small to be legible; or clarity is sacrificed to stylistic indulgence, as in some axonometrics of the Palladian villas whose purpose ultimately escapes understanding. It is evident by the differences in skills displayed that many authors contributed to the illustrations. And in view of the overall virtues of this book, any objection to one of its principle distinctions, such as its drawings, might also be considered quibbling. It should be remembered, however, that in order to achieve the didactic objectives of their book, the authors have conceived the text and drawings to be interdependent. Therefore, when the same control and precision that distinguishes the text is not applied consistently to its drawings, understanding of particular design complexities eventually stalls. And for those readers who accept the detailed challenges presented by the written arguments, the occasional graphic lapses can only be regrettable.

Despite any frustrations that it might

hold, this remains an important book. Apparently the product of many years of research, the object of strenuous field observations, and the focus of many remarkable observations, it easily deserves a place on the bookshelf next to other notable documents on the topic: David Coffin's *The Villa in the Life of Renaissance Rome* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), Georgina Masson's *Italian Gardens* (Woodbridge: Antique Collectors' Club, 1987), and J. G. Shepherd and G. A. Jellicoe's *Italian Gardens of the Renaissance* (New York: Architectural Book Pub. Co., 1966). More than any other book, *Italian Villas and Gardens* reminds us that the reputations of many of the architects that are celebrated between its covers—Vignola, Fontana, Peruzzi, Ligorio, and others—were principally established by the landscapes they designed. Conditions, admittedly, were different from those today. Contrary to the specialized and insular character of the design professions in contemporary society, the design field then constituted a single culture. Consequently, the design of a building, a portion of a city, or a natural landscape could all be understood as design analogues, each to be rationalized by the application of a system of spatial relationships and formal concepts.

The practice of this culture serves as the subject of this book. The question that the book finally raises is not why should it merit our attention, but why, after an extended popularity of publications on this topic, has it taken this long for someone to discuss Italian villas and gardens according to the tenets used by those who designed them.

ITALIAN VILLAS AND GARDENS: A CORSO DI DISEGNO, Paul van der Ree, Gerrit Smienk, and Clemens Steenbergen, Prestel (distributed in the U.S. by te Neues), 1992, 304 pp., illus., \$29.95.

DIANNE HARRIS

## Gardens and Gardening in Papal Rome

David R. Coffin

When David R. Coffin published *The Villa in the Life of Renaissance Rome* in 1979, he made an important contribution toward understanding the use of 15th- and 16th-century Roman villas and their gardens. In that work, Coffin introduced the concept of *villeggiatura*, or the retreat by urban Romans, particularly those of the elite classes, to suburban and extrarurban estates. Taking his readers to the end of the 16th century, Coffin provides a carefully documented, heavily descriptive account of the historical development of each of Rome's major villas. His book has become an acknowledged standard in the field, even though Coffin never quite achieved what he set out to accomplish. While his introduction emphasized the importance of understanding life in the villas, much of the text is devoted to formal and iconographic analysis, so that in many ways the book's weakest aspect, was the analysis that pertained to use. The importance of the work and the contributions of its author to the study of Italian garden history cannot be denied, although the work was justly criticized for its lack of a clear thesis and for its uninspired writing. (See James Ackerman's review in *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 39:3 [October 1980]: 242–43).

Fortunately, the author has supplemented his earlier work with a book of even greater importance, particularly to garden historians. Though *Gardens and Gardening in Papal Rome* also suffers from Coffin's conservative approach to the writing of history, the book is significant for what it reveals about the

way Roman gardens were made and used. In fourteen chapters, Coffin lays out the changes in form, meaning, and use that took place in major Roman gardens, from the medieval *hortus conclusus* through the gardens of the 18th century. Eschewing a strict chronological arrangement for his chapters, Coffin has instead chosen thematic subdivisions that include statuary gardens, waterworks, classical associations, iconography, art and nature, urban gardens, garden parks, French influence, “Flora et Pomona,” the gardener, entertainment, and finally, an excellent chapter that deals with public use in Roman villa gardens.

While the first half of the book provides a great deal of background information, it lacks the excitement of the second half where Coffin’s most important discoveries come to light. Still, diligent readers will be rewarded in the book’s early chapters with much enlightening information. For example, chapter three, titled “Waterworks: Fountains, Nymphaea, and Grottoes,” presents important evidence pertaining to the politics of water acquisition in Roman villa gardens. Water for use and display in these gardens was apportioned by grants from the Camera Apostolica and by papal edict, underscoring the value of water in the Mediterranean world and the seriousness with which its distribution was undertaken. The fact that water was diverted from the city aqueducts for use in gardens makes it clear that gardens were intimately connected to the urban fabric through manipulation of this aspect of the civic infrastructure.

Additionally, Coffin relates several examples of water-related feuds that erupted between powerful families competing for access to water for their gardens. Unfortunately, these important bits of information are buried in the

chapter. They receive no more emphasis in the text than other, less interesting facts, and tend to get lost in the morass of description and documentation. Had the author been more selective in including information and applied a stronger thesis to each chapter, the book would have been much stronger. An important connection might have been made, for example, between the documentation of water feuds and the kind of work Joseph Connors has undertaken in his essay “Alliance and Enmity in Roman Baroque Urbanism” (in *Römisches*



From the chapter “Waterworks,” an example of a humanistic fountain type, Fountain of the Sleeping Nymph, Colocci Garden, Rome; mid-16th century. (From *Gardens and Gardening in Papal Rome*.)

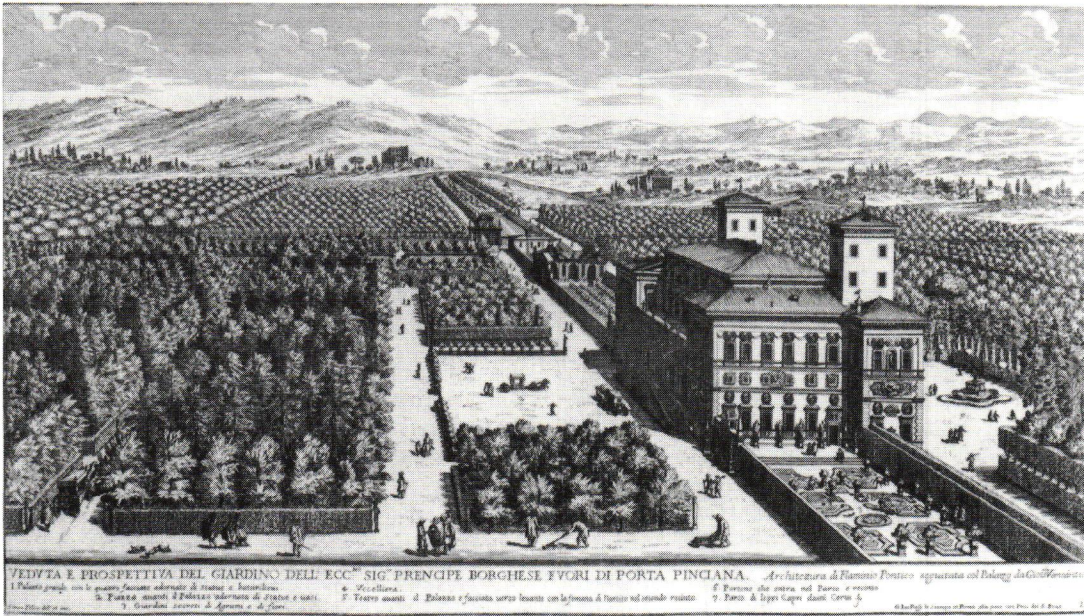
*Jahrbuch der Bibliotheca Hertziana* [1989], pp. 207–94), which maintains that the relationships between powerful Roman families are key to the understanding of the formal arrangement of Rome’s urban open spaces. This kind of synthetic analysis is not Coffin’s strength, but he compensates for it in his presentation of new material that helps the reader understand the Roman villa gardens in a new context.

To this end, the final four chapters are the most useful, presenting material that helps close some crucial gaps in our understanding of the landscape of Rome, both public and private, especially from the 17th through the 19th

centuries. Chapter eleven, for example, entitled “Flora et Pomona,” reveals new information about the particular plants that were used in both privately owned gardens and in the public landscape. Many readers, particularly those interested in questions of the urban landscape, will benefit from Coffin’s translation and embellishment of Richard Krautheimer’s somewhat obscure publication which deals with Pope Alexander VII’s massive street tree planting campaign in the 1650s (see Krautheimer’s “Roma Verde nel Seicento” in *Studi in onore di Giulio Carlo Arqan* 2 [Rome, 1984]: 71–82). While this information is available in other sources, Coffin’s translation makes the work more widely accessible to an English-speaking audience and to landscape architects and students of garden history who may be less likely to come across this information. This chapter, along with an appendix on plant materials and plant costs, provides a much more complete understanding of one of the garden’s primary materials—which, until very recently, has received relatively little attention from garden historians. In this sense, Coffin’s two books,

along with Claudia Lazzaro’s *The Italian Renaissance Garden* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990) which also contains important new information on the specific plants used in gardens of the 15th and 16th centuries, form an important and complementary trilogy on the history of the garden in Rome and Tuscany.

Coffin’s final two chapters examine the Roman villa gardens within their social context, and, in so doing, make perhaps the most significant contributions to garden history. It is here that Coffin finally broadens his reader’s understanding of the place of the villa within the life and urban fabric of Rome.



Villa Borghese, Rome; Giovanni-Battista Falda, ca. 1670. The engraving depicts two men in the foreground with a rake and wheelbarrow. (From *Gardens and Gardening in Papal Rome*.)

Although published earlier in a 1982 essay, “The *Lex Hortorum* and Access to Gardens of Latium During the Renaissance” (see *Journal of Garden History* 2 [1982]: 201–32), the author expands on this earlier work on the *lex hortorum*, or signs, that invited the public to use many of the large villa gardens. A fourth appendix contains a sampling of these inscriptions, or *leges hortorum*, providing ample documentation. By showing readers that the large papal villas were not private, but were instead open to a large sector of the Roman populace (excluding Jews, beggars, and the lower classes), Coffin has placed these gardens within a new context. His work shows us that these gardens were more closely linked to the urban fabric and to the social life of the city than had been previously believed, making them even more important as cultural artifacts that reveal a great deal about the daily lives of men and women outside the elite classes.

Coffin illustrates the book almost exclusively with reproductions of primary documents and, for this reason too, the book complements Lazzaro’s, which relies so heavily on lush color

photographs. But these illustrations are taken, as they have been by most garden historians, at face value, with little consideration for the manipulation of landscape and of the viewer that is inherent in representational media and from which the historian can learn much.

An additional weakness—and one that exists in nearly all the research on Italian gardens to date—is the book’s lack of adequate discussion of these gardens in the broader context of environmental history and philosophy—specifically the question of attitudes toward nature framed in the context of the history of ideas. While recent scholars have attempted to deal with this issue (Lazzaro among them), the discussion neglects the pivotal scholarship of environmental historians such as Carolyn Merchant (*The Death of Nature*, 1980; *Ecological Revolutions*, 1989), Donald Worster (*Nature’s Economy*, 1977; *Dust Bowl*, 1979; *Rivers of Empire*, 1985), and William Cronon (*Changes in the Land*, 1983), to name a few. Even Clarence Glacken’s *Traces on the Rhodian Shore* (1967) remains underused and inadequately applied, as

does the work of social historians and philosophers who have dealt with the question of “nature” and its definitions in significant ways (see for example Alfred Schmidt, *The Concept of Nature in Marx*, 1971, and the works of the first- and second-generation Frankfurt School historians and philosophers). Unless important connections of this kind are made with greater frequency and rigor, Italian garden history will continue its internalized focus which inevitably leads to a fossilized view of gardens as isolated artifacts sepa-

rated from the economic, intellectual, and political developments of which they were a part.

In discussing the weaknesses of Coffin’s book, I do not intend to diminish its importance. Coffin is among the most distinguished of garden historians and his works will provide future historians, including this reviewer, with the basis for much research. His books will remain a touchstone for scholarship on Italian gardens and villas for many years to come.

GARDENS AND GARDENING IN PAPAL ROME, David R. Coffin, Princeton University Press, 1991, 285 pp., illus., \$59.50.

ELEANOR M. McPECK

## The Modernist Garden in France

Dorothee Imbert

In her admirable book, *The Modernist Garden in France*, Dorothee Imbert surveys the development of French garden design between 1910 and 1930. Imbert, an independent scholar with advanced degrees in architecture and landscape architecture, is thoroughly familiar with her subject, which is rarely mentioned by landscape historians, and now of enormous interest to present-day designers.

The landscape architect and critic Fletcher Steele was one of the first Americans to address the subject. In an article entitled "New Pioneering in Garden Design," published in *Landscape Architecture* in 1930, Steele declared that the modern garden had not yet been defined. "What a modernistic garden may be is everybody's guess. The reason is that it does not yet exist as a type. We gardeners have always been behind other artists in adopting new ideas. At heart we are a conservative lot."

In an era characterized by revolutionary change in the visual arts and in architecture, landscape fell noticeably behind. As Imbert points out, for the first two decades of the 20th century, garden design relied heavily on historical precedent. Achille Duchène, for example, relied almost entirely on the *style regulier* (the classic formal style) in his designs for large country estates.

J. C. N. Forestier (1861–1930), who was the Paris parks superintendent and designer in charge of the restoration of

André Le Nôtre's Parc de Sceaux and the Bagatelle, steered a middle course between the two primary styles—the *regulier* and the *paysager* (irregular or picturesque)—though, quite paradoxically, he was placed in charge of the garden section of the 1925 Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Moderne. The Expo marked an important turning point in French garden design, for it was here that the first modernist experiments were exhibited. Foremost in this category was Robert Mallet-Stevens' remarkable garden that featured four prestressed concrete trees (designed by Jan and Joel Martel), enclosed by walls of grass.

Additionally, Gabriel Guevrekian's Jardin d'Eau et de Lumière, or Jardin Persan as the press dubbed it, consisted of a triangular pool formed by four red-and-blue basins. At the center, above the pool, was a luminous, electronically propelled sphere. Guevrekian, like Mallet-Stevens, sought to embrace cubist principles as well as Simultaneist ideas, which were advanced by Sonia and Robert Delaunay.

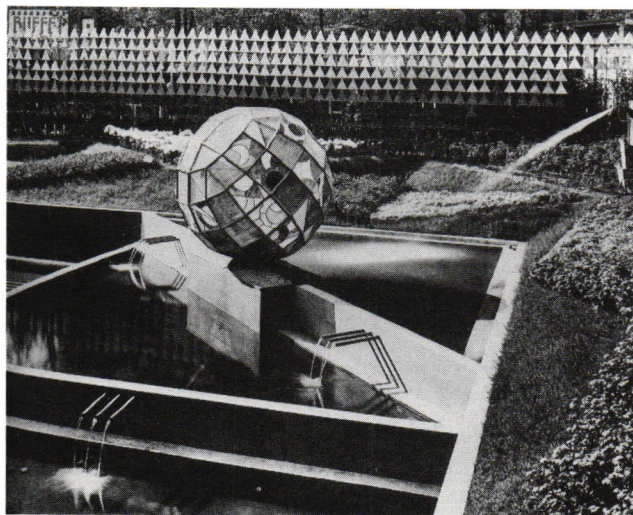
Of Armenian descent, Guevrekian was born in Istanbul in 1900. He later moved to Vienna and in 1915 entered the architecture department of the Acad-

emy of Applied Arts. Though not a student of Joseph Hoffmann, who taught at the school, Guevrekian worked in his office. The young architect then joined the office of Henri Sauvage in Paris before collaborating with Mallet-Stevens on several projects, including the handsome brick-paved garden for fashion designer Jacques Heim at Neuilly, and the much-celebrated Noailles garden at Hyères, both in 1928. Considered a milestone of early modernism, the Villa de Noailles, commissioned by Charles and Marie de Noailles in 1927, occupied a marvelous site overlooking the Mediterranean. "Its stark volumes, firmly anchored to the land, formed a rock terrace that dominated the site. . . . With the Noailles pennant floating at the top of the tower, the villa resembled a ship stranded on a hillside."

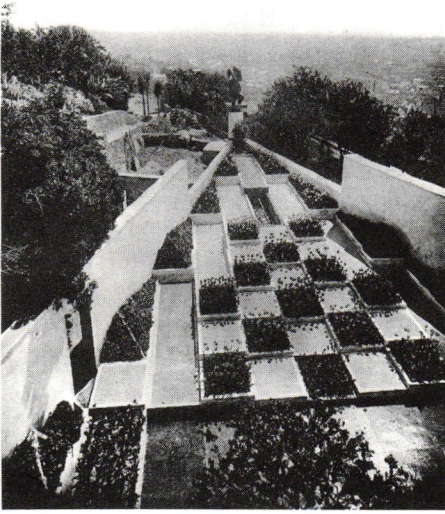
Guevrekian's cubist scheme for the terrace was essentially an elongated isosceles triangle. Within the triangle were geometrically composed of mosaic-tile squares alternating with raised beds of tulips. At the apex of the terrace was a pool, and above it, as the visual focal point of the design, Jacques Lipchitz's figurehead, "La Joie de Vivre," an abstract dancing figure that rotated elec-

tronically above the sea. As Imbert reports, this extraordinary garden fell into ruins by the end of the 1930s. The estate was bequeathed to the city of Hyères in 1973, and fortunately, in the past few years, the villa and the triangular garden have been partially restored.

A third figure associated with this experimental period is Pierre-Emile Legrain, a celebrated book and interior designer who had received recognition for his arrangement of the grounds at the 1925 Exposition (but Imbert does not specify the details of his involvement). In the previ-



Jardin d'Eau et de Lumière, at the 1925 Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Moderne, Paris; Gabriel Guevrekian. (From *The Modernist Garden in France*.)



View of the cubist garden at Villa Noailles, from the lawn terrace, Hyères, France; Gabriel Guevrekian, 1927. (From *The Modernist Garden in France*.)

ous year, Legrain had designed a much-praised garden for Jeanne and André Tachard at La Celle-Saint-Cloud. His design for the garden, which replaced an earlier *jardin paysager*, was asymmetrical in its overall conception and featured an *allée* bordered by a triangulated, zigzagged planting bed. Imbert says that this garden, apparently Legrain's sole essay in landscape architecture, "greatly influenced a trio of students" at the Harvard Graduate School of Design in 1937—namely, Garrett Eckbo, Dan Kiley, and James Rose. Imbert further suggests that Legrain's approach to topography, his subtle changes in grading throughout the Tachard garden, made a substantial impression on this

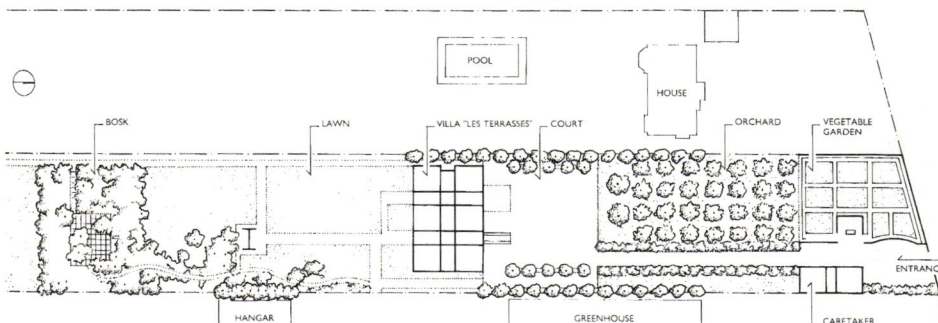
younger generation of American landscape architects.

In addition to her detailed account of Mallet-Stevens' and Guevrekian's contributions to modernist landscape history, Imbert offers a careful analysis of Le Corbusier's attitude toward gardens and landscape, using as illustrations the Pavillon de L'Esprit Nouveau from the 1925 exposition, the Villa Meyer (Neuilly, 1925), the Villa Stein-de Monzie (Garches, 1927), the Villa Church (d'Avray, 1928), the Villa Savoie (Poissy, 1931), the Beisteugui roof garden (Paris, 1930), and the house for his mother on Lac Lehman (Les Corseaux, Switzerland, 1923).

Imbert's analysis of the Villa Stein-de Monzie in particular provides much new material on Le Corbusier's approach to landscape. Known as the Villa les Terrasses, it was designed by Le Corbusier and his cousin Pierre Jeanneret for Michael and Sarah Stein and Gabrielle de Monzie on the outskirts of Paris, "on a long narrow lot covered with vegetation." Imbert furnishes a previously unpublished site plan indicating an "exquisite graphic composition that weighed densities, masses, and voids." In this plan, the house occupies the central portion of the scheme, although it is barely visible, situated within view of a clearly articulated orchard and geometric garden within a bosk of trees. Unfortunately, this complex arrangement was not carried out. As Imbert says, the contrast between the orthogonal project of

1926 and the loosely structured plan later built, which includes informal groups of trees and shrubs, is puzzling. The orthogonal plan for the Villa les Terrasses clearly implies that Le Corbusier sought to go beyond the framed "Virgilian" landscape associated with the Villa Savoie and the Villa Meyer project, with its framed view of the Folie St. James (a well-known 18th-century park designed in the picturesque manner by François Belanger). Although Imbert's analysis is very thorough, Le Corbusier's contribution to the modernist landscape still needs further study.

In her final chapter, devoted to the architect André Lurçat, Imbert is inclined to give Lurçat rather than Le Corbusier credit for reconciling the geometries of the house with the design of the surrounding exterior: "But while Le Corbusier set a pure architectural prism against a naturalistic landscape, Lurçat extended the geometric order at the ground level." Imbert continues, "[Lurçat] insisted on the importance of framing the house with a garden that followed similar compositional rules, more specifically the rules of geometry. Lurçat thus . . . shaped the garden into a reinvigorated regular style." His design for the Villa Bomsel garden (Versailles, 1925), for example, though axial in arrangement, achieved a sense of modernity through its use of concrete furniture and raised triangular planting beds. "The Bomsel garden did possess both a classical structure and the balance in scale between outdoor and indoor living spaces—which [Christopher] Tunnard considered a requisite of modern landscape design." Two other examples, the Arnold Huggler Garden and the Bertrand Garden (both in Cité Seurat, 1925), with their geometrically arranged terraces, seem to bear out Imbert's thesis, and to reconfirm the French preference for clarity of form and geometric precision over the irregularities associated with the late-19th-century interpretations of the *style paysager*.



Villa les Terrasses, Garches, France; Le Corbusier. This early orthogonal plan, dated 1926, contrasts with the more informal realized design of 1927. (From *The Modernist Garden in France*.)

As nearly all of the gardens mentioned have deteriorated beyond recognition or disappeared completely (except, most notably, the recently restored Villa de Noailles and some of Le Corbusier's work, including the Villa Stein-de Monzie and the Villa Savoie), Imbert relies primarily on photographic evidence for interpreting these lost landscapes. Her book is richly illustrated, with black-and-white photographs and plans drawn mainly from important books of the period, including Joseph Marrasts' *Jardins* (1925) and André Lurçat's *Terrasses et Jardins* (1929), as well as a fair number of images taken by Imbert herself, and seventeen hand-somely produced color plates, many of them reproductions of historical drawings. Well-researched and carefully documented, the book also provides an invaluable bibliography.

*The Modernist Garden in France* prompts a new look at the origins of the modern landscape, and makes clear the significant contribution made by architects and designers *outside* the landscape profession. Some readers will be surprised to learn that one of the most influential designs of the period was made by a bookbinder and interior designer—Legrain. And, controversial though they seemed in 1925, Guevrekian's designs now appear overly decorative and not spatially sophisticated. The collaborative aspect of this period is bound to fascinate the current generation of landscape designers, given that the period's most challenging designs were produced in response to contemporary developments in sculpture, painting, and the decorative arts, as well as in architecture.

PETER NEAL

## Landscape Design: An International Survey

*Ken Fieldhouse and  
Sheila Harvey, Editors*

Until recently, the work of landscape architects has received little mainstream media attention. The majority of landscape publications are primarily geared toward providing technical information to professionals, or toward serving the interests of landscape historians, garden designers, horticulturalists, or the occasional high-profile practitioner.

It is interesting now to see the publication of several large-format "modern" landscape-design books specifically aimed at illustrating recent achievements of the profession. Some approach this subject within a critical academic framework, while others, including Ken Fieldhouse and Sheila Harvey, editors of *Landscape Design: An International Survey*, provide a glossy portfolio of recent projects. Fieldhouse and Harvey claim that other design disciplines, such as architecture, interiors, textiles, furniture, and fashion, receive frequent attention from both publishers and the popular press, and explain that the purpose of their survey is to redress, in part, this imbalance.

In an attempt to review contemporary landscape architecture, the main criterion for inclusion in the book is that projects originated post-1980; they are drawn from as wide a geographical and cultural base as possible. In an attempt to structure the presentation, the fifty-nine selected schemes have been grouped into four broad categories: "Leisure and Recreation," "Corporate and Commercial," "Civic and Educational," and "Landscape Planning and

Management." Such categorization is far from definitive: for example, projects designed to address issues of reclamation, the provision of environments associated with housing, or the restoration of historic parks and gardens are not included. Yet such omissions cannot be held against a publication whose main pretext is to provide a broad international survey. With projects drawn from as far afield as Mexico City, Yokohama, County Donegal in Ireland, Caracas in Venezuela, Useppa Island in Florida, and Wilmslow in England, the book achieves much in exposing readers to a diverse cultural geography.

Once placed within one of the four main categories, each project is presented in varying degrees of detail and various media: for example, Robin Winogrand's Ruhegarten, designed for the State Garden Show in Pforzheim, Germany, is illustrated solely by simple concept models; Gilles Vexlard and Laurence Vacherot's Le Jardin du Jardinage in Paris' Parc de la Villette is depicted in CAD-generated perspectives; and, in order to present their scheme for the Battle Estate in East Sussex, the Property Services Agency (of England's Department of the Environment) relies on the use of large illustrative landscape photographs, taken several years after the project's completion.

It would be a mistake to attempt a rapid summary of all the projects presented in the book, yet several deserve particular recognition. For over three hundred years, Imari City has been famous in Japan for the manufacture of traditional pottery. When modern industry began to destroy the character and culture of the town, Zen Environmental Design, a firm based in Fukuoka, Japan, was commissioned to restore the city's character and culture through the building of the Nabeshima Ceramic Park. Zen's approach was both economically and historically minded: by using recycled ceramics to create a new pottery

museum and park, and by involving local residents of all ages in its building process, the city has enjoyed a renaissance. The new park has succeeded in bringing tourists back into the town, which, as a result, has seen a considerable rise in pottery sales.

In contrast to the long cultural history associated with Imari's ceramic park, the design by San Francisco firm Peter Walker & Partners for a new office park called Solana (home to the regional headquarters of IBM) in Westlake, Texas, draws on the existing ecological structure of a broad, prairie landscape to determine the siting of the new building compound. The firm's bold landscape design for Solana, which means "a place in the sun," is sharp-edged, with highly structured cultivated areas immediately surrounding each building. Walker's design attempts to reconcile the often conflicting movements of environmentalism and post-modernism.

Similarly, the office of Peter Rolland & Associates of Rye, New York, responds to topographic influences on a grand

scale in its highly commendable work on the new Australian Parliament House in Canberra. By treating built form and land form with equal importance, the designers created a suitably monumental yet natural building, articulated via formal secluded courtyards and extensive rolling lawns.

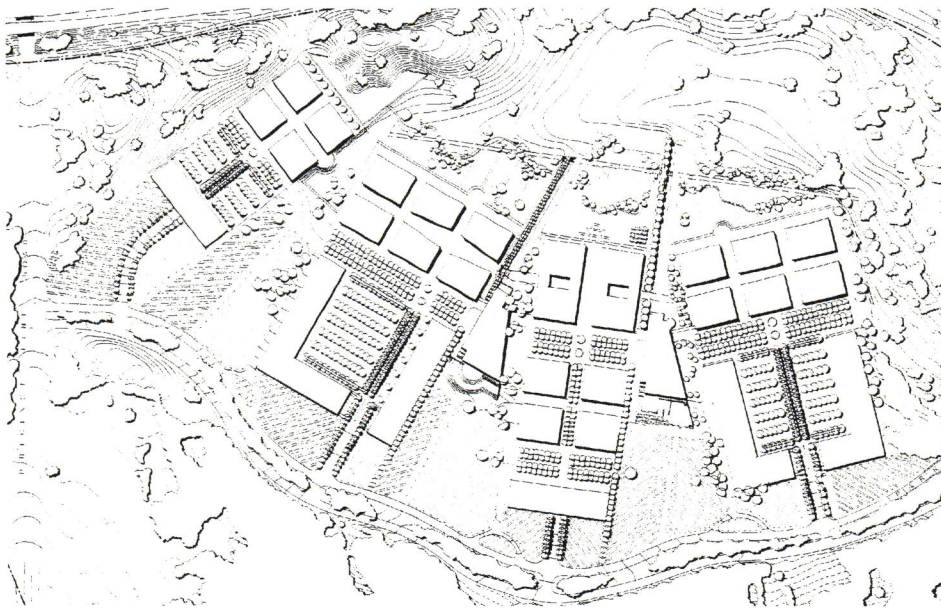
On a more intimate scale, Guttorm Guttormsgaard's design for the new central square of the University of Tromsø, Norway, also takes into account the local environment and climate. By drawing on the surrounding natural elements and using a labyrinthine pattern that stems from Arctic folklore, Guttormsgaard produced an exciting communal space for university staff, students, and the surrounding population. In addition to responding to its location, the labyrinth theme creates a vivid sense of place through both its geometry and its central element—a basin of water that is kept hot year-round.

In the book's introduction, Fieldhouse and Harvey remind readers that one of the established tenets of landscape architecture is to respect the

*genius loci*, or "sense of place," of a site when evaluating design work. It is difficult to assess whether the projects depicted in the book succeed in such a mission, or to interpret its popularity, context, space, or seasonality solely through the brief textual and visual representation provided.

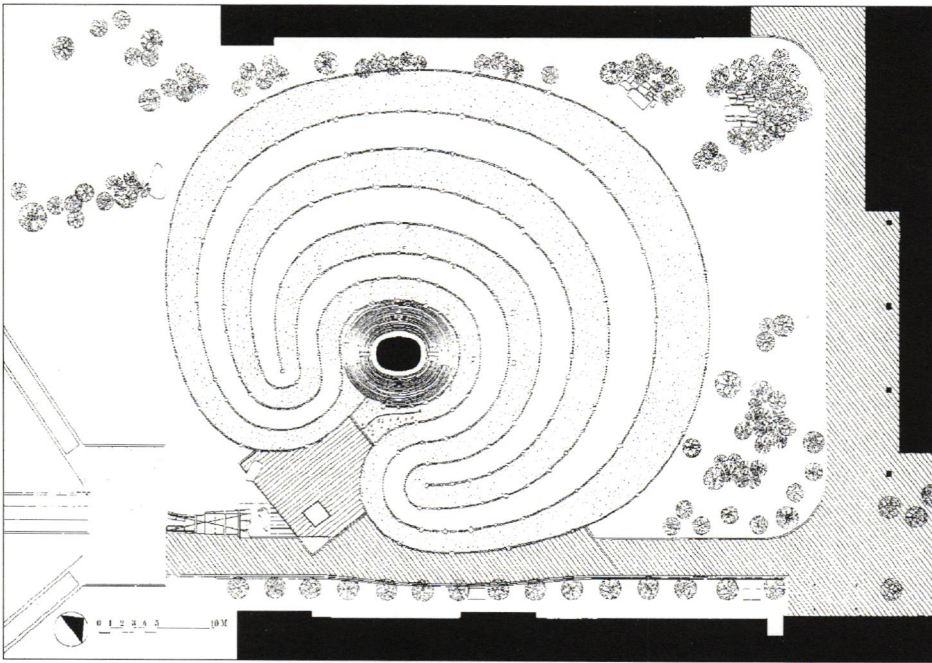
The book highlights the fact that contemporary landscape architecture generally fails to fall into clearly defined movements, as for example, architecture or fine arts do. This may be considered both the profession's strength and weakness, for it has not been subject to the same proliferation of styles. However, there are some themes that can be distilled from such a diverse portfolio. For example, the last two decades have seen the continuation of a natural design movement that has clearly been influenced by both the original 18th-century English landscape movement and the recent rise in popularity of environmental politics. To illustrate, the book includes plans for the Ntshondwe Game Reserve in Natal, South Africa, by the Environmental Design Partnership, aimed at enhancing the educational, research, and recreational resources of the park within a broad conservation framework; as well as Chris Baines' design for the New Victoria Theatre at Stoke-on-Trent, England, which involved large numbers of local people to create a landscape that maximized the ecological potential of the site.

Additionally, the last decade has witnessed increasing attempts to interpret the modernist philosophy in architecture. Many of the corporate landscape projects in the United States reflect this tendency. The work, for example, of Peter Walker & Partners for IBM's Federal Systems Division Facilities in Pasadena, Texas, incorporated bold, geometrically radiating pools around architecture firm CRSS's postmodern building; Dan Kiley's North Carolina National Bank plaza in Tampa, Florida,



Plan of the corporate office park Solana, in Westlake, Texas; Peter Walker & Associates, in progress. The highly ordered landscape displays a strong contrast between the natural prairie and the man-made environment, comprised of discrete building compounds that are reached by four-lane landscaped parkways. (From *Landscape Design*.)





Design for University Square, Tromsø, Norway, inspired by a labyrinthine snake pattern from Arctic folklore; Guttorm Guttormsgaard and Bjarne Aasen, 1989–91. (From *Landscape Design*.)

imprints a distinct building facade onto a formal plaza plan. Both of these crisply executed designs clearly illustrate modernist leanings.

But it is difficult to clearly detect a coherent style, let alone understand what may be considered a distinct product, of the 1980s, when viewing the copious illustrations of EuroDisney Magic Kingdom at Marne-la-Vallée, France, imagined by the England-based Derek Lovejoy Partnership; or Andresen and Castel-Branco Arquitectura's courtyard at the Catholic University School of Biotechnology at Oporto, Portugal; or Johnson, Johnson & Roy's scheme for the Franconia Notch State Park and Parkway in New Hampshire's White Mountains. Perhaps one may only conclude that such heterogeneity can only reflect the considerable diversity of habitat and culture from which the landscape designs were born.

When reviewing this contemporary portfolio, it is necessary to keep in mind that such schemes can rarely be considered "carved in stone." The completion of a landscape project generally only

heralds the onset of natural processes that require several years, if not decades, to achieve original objectives. Fieldhouse and Harvey suggest that "the viability of a scheme will only be achieved through a program of effective management and maintenance." In this case, *Landscape Design: An International Survey* shows only the first act of each play. Time will tell whether the schemes are truly successful. Too often, many promising projects fail when there is a lack of understanding or interest in the continuance of the initial landscape investment. An updated or revisited edition of the book should be considered in the future.

The book provides an exciting cross-section of international landscape projects, although, understandably, the majority of work has been taken from countries where the practice of landscape architecture is most advanced. With respect to the multitude of international environmental issues that have received widespread attention during the 1980s, this selection generally addresses the environmental needs of the "first

world"; there is little evidence here of a landscape architecture that is aimed at tackling such issues as improving agricultural production, protecting biological resources, or alleviating chronic industrial pollution. In this book, the reader will find international design solutions that address the needs of corporate image, civic pride, economic regeneration, and environmental recreation. Although the projects fail to highlight specific design styles that clearly can be dated to the 1980s, it will be interesting to see whether, with the passing of time, this book will provide a distinctive archive of late-20th-century landscape architectural work. The editors should be commended for providing an immediately accessible and attractive, if somewhat glossy, resource that will appeal to both professionals and lay readers. Although the publication could well have benefited from a more rigorous, theoretical analysis of the work presented, it may well succeed in raising the profile of landscape architecture.

LANDSCAPE DESIGN: AN INTERNATIONAL SURVEY, Ken Fieldhouse and Sheila Harvey, editors, The Overlook Press, 1993, 240 pp., illus., \$65.00

NASSER RABBAT

## Writing the History of Islamic Architecture In Cairo

Among the cities most often associated with Islamic civilization, Cairo is perhaps the most “Islamic” in its outlook and image, and decidedly the richest in monuments. Its architectural legacy spans the gamut of styles we now call Islamic, from the 7th through the 20th centuries. Founded at the strategic head of the Nile delta as the new capital of the country after the Islamic conquest in A.D. 641, the city, originally called al-Fustat, expanded by annexing its northern satellites. In 969 a rectangular camp was established by the invading Fatimids, also to the north, and it soon became their new capital. It was called al-Qahira (the Victorious), from which “Cairo”—its Italian distortion—was derived. Later, a citadel, built by Salah al-Din (Saladin) in the 1170s on an outcrop to the east, became the hub of a newly walled area comprising the two older urban centers. The Mamluk period (1250–1517) produced a wealth of monuments that synthesized the achievements of previous ages and symbolized the image of the city for centuries to come. After this most spectacular epoch, Cairo was reduced to an Ottoman provincial capital until the end of the 18th century. Then, the city had a short and capricious renaissance under its independent-minded ruler, Muhammad ‘Ali (1805–48), followed by a period of vacillation between conservatism and modernization—a condition that has been further exacerbated by a population explosion in recent decades and its concomitant urban degradation.<sup>1</sup>

While Cairo preserves many of its Islamic monuments (456 registered by

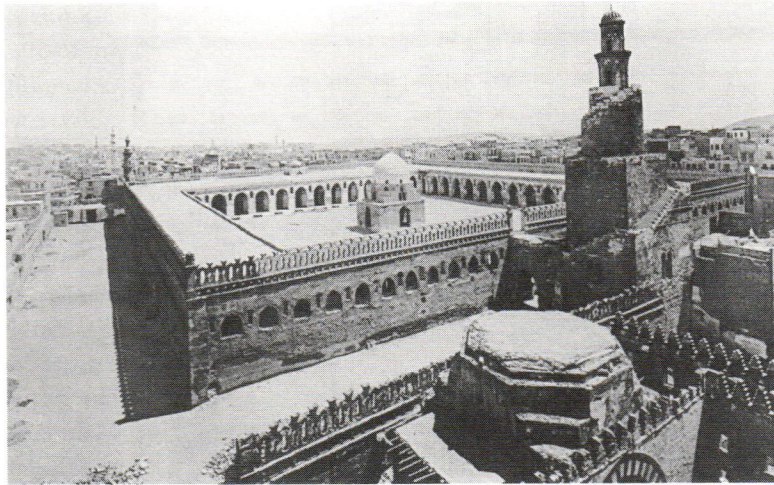
the 1951 Survey of the Islamic Monuments of Cairo), their number is dwindling at an exceedingly alarming pace. Their destruction, brought on by a mixture of neglect, greed, and chaotic expansion, went almost unnoticed until the October 1992 earthquake, which focused the attention of international organizations on some of the perennial problems of architectural conservation in Cairo and prompted the publication of several studies whose recommendations have yet to be implemented. All the while, Cairo’s architectural gems remain largely unknown to the world’s architectural community. This, however, is no fault of the city’s dwellers, architects, planners, and decision-makers, or even of the international conservationists. It is the result of a historical process whose roots date back to the 17th and 18th centuries and the genesis of the field of architectural history, which was unwilling to integrate Islamic architecture into its general discourse.<sup>2</sup> The initial exclusion, which stemmed from cultural arrogance, led to the polarization of knowledge during the colonial period and the relegation of the study of Islamic architecture to area specialists who collected, analyzed, codified, and classified its specimens and presented them as examples of a seemingly endogenous and insular architectural tradition.

Nowhere is this more true than in the case of Cairo, for the effects of the biased conceptual frameworks of European historians—whose notion of architectural evolution runs from pharaonic Egypt to Greece and Rome to the Christian Western tradition, and the modern drive to compartmentalize knowledge—were further compounded by the traditional, cosmocentric attitudes of the native scholars. The particularist tendency is discernible from the early Islamic period, but, due to a number of historical and geopolitical reasons, Egyptians’ sense of territorial and national identity intensified in medieval times. It led to the development of a novel histor-

ical genre wherein these feelings found expression through historians’ careful and meticulous descriptions of everything that pertains to Egypt, and to a greater extent Cairo as the country’s major metropolis. The genre later acquired the name *khitat* (which means “planned urban quarter,” and by extension is used to designate what could be called topographical/historical studies), probably after the influential book of Taqi al-Din al-Maqrizi, *al-Mawa‘iz wa-l-I‘tibar bi-Dhikr al-Khitat wa-l-Athar* (Exhortations and Reflection on the History of Settlements and Monuments), which, unfortunately, was never fully translated into any European language.<sup>3</sup> Composed between 1415 and 1424, this encyclopedic work carefully records each and every street and important structure in Cairo and, to a lesser degree, those of other Egyptian cities, with individual descriptions and the history of everything connected with them. Most modern histories of Cairo relied heavily on Maqrizi’s data, and many, especially those written by Egyptians, even adopted his methods and reflected his idiosyncrasies by considering the city’s architectural history as an autonomous development. One 19th-century author, ‘Ali Pasha Mubarak, consciously modeled his massive twenty-volume compendium, *al-Khitat al-Tawfiqiyya al-Jadida* (The New Settlements in the Age of Tawfiq), and even named it after Maqrizi’s *Khitat*.<sup>4</sup> In his book, Mubarak updated Maqrizi’s material and added sections on the development of Cairo between the 15th and the 19th centuries.<sup>5</sup>

The 19th century brought another intellectual tradition to bear on the study of the architecture of Cairo: the European empirical method of documentation and analysis of its arts and material culture. Its first application in Egypt and perhaps its most majestic paradigm is *La Description de l’Égypte*, which was the joint effort of more than one hundred scientists, scholars, and engineers who

accompanied Napoléon on his expedition to Egypt (1798–1801). Published in Paris between 1803 and 1828 in nine volumes of text and twelve folio volumes of illustrations, *La Description de l'Égypte* is a *catalogue raisonné* of sorts that formed the basis of the modern understanding of Egypt, its pharaonic and Islamic patrimony as well as its contemporary conditions. The two volumes on modern Egypt contain



The Mosque of Ibn Tulun, Cairo, built by Ahmad ibn Tulun, 876–79. (From *A Short Account of Early Muslim Architecture*.)

a selection of measured plans, perspective drawings, and analytical details of important Islamic monuments that offers the first visually comprehensive and typologically codified analysis of Cairo's architectural heritage.<sup>6</sup>

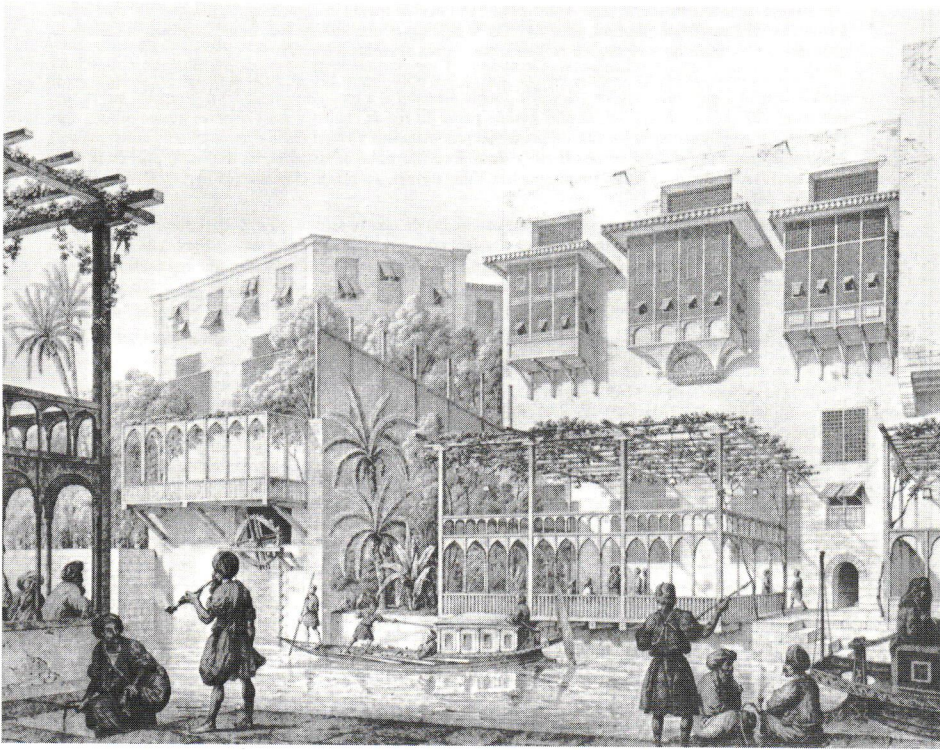
The immediate successor in the tradition of *La Description's* recording method was *L'Architecture Arabe ou Monuments du Kaire mesurés et dessinés de 1818 à 1826*, an impressive survey of Cairene architecture by Pascal Coste, a French architect from Marseilles who worked in Egypt from 1817 and 1827.<sup>7</sup> This book, which focuses exclusively on Islamic monuments, is presented visually and graphically in the grand tradition of the *École des Beaux Arts*, where Coste was trained, and is prefaced by a concise historical introduction and short, descriptive paragraphs that explain the drawings. After Coste's study, several books on Cairo's architecture were published in the 19th and early 20th centuries, but none were as exhaustive architecturally or as speculative analytically. One study, Martin S. Briggs' 1924 work, *Muhammadan Architecture in Egypt and Palestine* (reprinted 1974), stands out for its conscious attempt to explore the links between the architecture of Cairo and the Syro-Palestinian cities, such as Jerusalem, Damascus, and Aleppo—its historical and cultural neighbors.

Then came the most comprehensive and most architecturally correct study and the lifetime work of a diligent Englishman, K. A. C. Creswell, who single-handedly measured, photographed, researched, and drew all known Cairene monuments up to 1311, and published them in two heavy volumes which, with their two predecessors on early Muslim architecture established the field of Islamic architecture on solid, definite grounds.<sup>8</sup> (A 1991 issue of the journal *Muqarnas* was devoted to Creswell and his legacy.) Creswell's systematic technique of investigation was perfect for the formal evaluation of buildings, but in his drive for methodological rigor and quantitative accuracy he overlooked or misread many subtleties about the architecture and its context. Thus, his deterministic proclamations have been superseded by subsequent scholarship. But his plans and architectural descriptions still furnish the basis for any serious study of Cairene architecture. Furthermore, Creswell's passion for things Egyptian, his linear architectural chronology, and the extensiveness of his documentation have indirectly supplied a number of scholarly pretexts for later arguments of an endogenous Cairene architectural tradition, despite his own fanatic preoccupation with "architectural origins" and formal parallels between buildings regardless of

their geographical or cultural connectedness.<sup>9</sup>

Hence, it is only natural that the work of the first generation of university-trained Egyptian architectural historians exudes an aura of self-centeredness and particularism, for, even with their nationalistic or religious tendencies set aside, these scholars were greatly influenced by three exclusivist scholarly currents: the long Egyptian literary tradition of

*khitat*; the more recent European epistemological framework that resulted in studies based on the binary oppositions of us/them, West/Orient (generally referred to as Orientalism); and the idiosyncratic but powerful Creswellian paradigm which was Egypto-centric probably for reasons opposite those of its Orientalist predecessors or contemporaries (with the possible exception of Pascal Coste). All Egyptian studies reflect this mixed intellectual ancestry in varying combinations, but the legacy of the *khitat* genre dominates their discourse and permeates their language. In fact, some of these studies are so affected by the two old Egyptian *khitats* that they are essentially new renditions of them with a visually oriented outlook. Two examples are the books of Hasan 'Abdel-Wahab and of Su'ad Maher, which deal with the mosques of Cairo and Egypt respectively.<sup>10</sup> Other authors are more analytical, though they still depend on *khitat* data and syntax. Some even extend the scope of their analyses in order to establish links with pre-Islamic architectural traditions around the Mediterranean and other Islamic developments outside Egypt. Their works diverge from the chronological or topographic order of *khitat*-inspired studies and adopt one of two more inclusive methods: the first is the typologically structured survey, and



Vacation home with gardens and terraces, bordering the canal that is used for irrigation and transportation, near Bab al-Sariyya; after Pascal Coste, ca. 1827. (From *Palais et Maisons du Caire II, Epoque Ottomane.*)

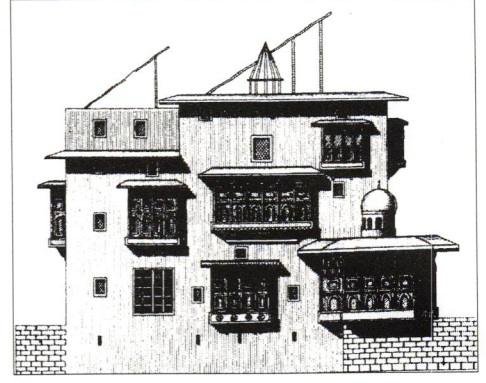
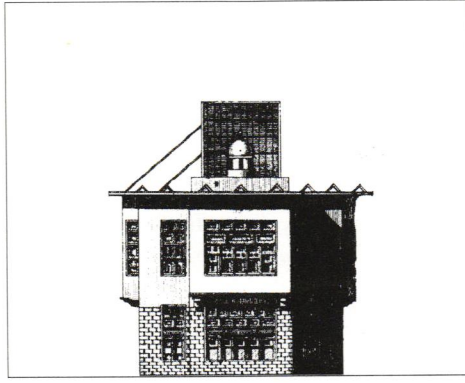
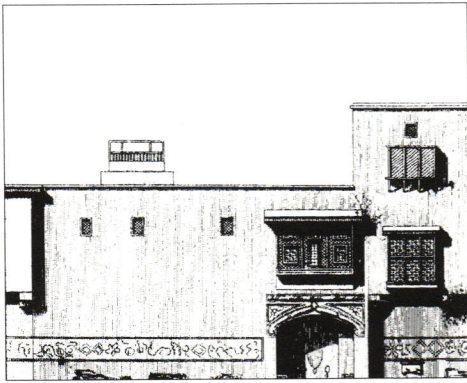
its most successful representative is Ahmad Fikri's three-volume book on Cairene religious architecture, *Masajid al-Qahira wa Madarisaha*; the second is writing architectural history as a historical narrative, whose examples include the works of Creswell's student Farid Shafe'i, who at times engaged in a polemic against his former tutor, 'Abd al-Rahman Zaki, and Ahmad 'Abd al-Razzaq Ahmad.<sup>11</sup>

The last addition to the corpus of studies on Cairene architecture is Doris Behrens-Abouseif's recent book with the self-descriptive title, *Islamic Architecture in Cairo: An Introduction* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1989). Its first part offers three concise articles presenting background material on the city's history and expansion, the stylistic evolution of its architecture, and its domestic architecture (though this last section suffers from many omissions). Part two is a survey of sixty-one mostly religious complexes and monuments, each of which has a descriptive entry. Arranged in six chap-

ters that correspond roughly to the usual periodization of Cairene history, from the 7th to the 19th centuries, the entries vary in length from half a page to five pages; the shortest appear for monuments built after Maqrizi's time and Creswell's cutoff date of 1311. At first glance the book appears to be an ideal textbook for a course on Islamic architecture in Cairo aimed at non-Arabic speakers—which is indeed a staple course in the Department of Arabic Studies at the American University of Cairo, and which Behrens-Abouseif has taught. However, a number of errors, exclusions of important structures, and the absence of a general map diminish its value as a teaching tool.<sup>12</sup>

The book undoubtedly fills a gap in the library of traditional Cairene architectural history written in English. No handy scholarly review of Cairo's Islamic monuments has appeared since Martin Briggs's 1924 study and Henriette R. L. Devonshire's *Rambles in Cairo* of 1931. Even the second edition of Creswell's

*Muslim Architecture of Egypt*, published in 1969, which was still incomplete chronologically and bulky for perusal, quickly went out of print. But, despite the fact that Behrens-Abouseif's book is written in English, it still corresponds more to the model of recent Egyptian architectural history books than to their Western counterparts. This conformity is discernible in two interrelated aspects. First, Behrens-Abouseif, like her Egyptian peers, depends on the *khitats* of Maqrizi and Mubarak as primary sources of information, and sometimes misinformation. Maqrizi is summoned for almost every discussion of a pre-1432 building (a hefty two-thirds of the book's inventory), while Mubarak's citations dominate the rest. Second, an impression of endogeneity and self-sufficiency pervades Behrens-Abouseif's analysis of the evolution of Islamic architecture in Cairo, which is similar to that encountered in the works of 'Abdel-Wahab, Maher, Shafe'i, and Zaki. The origin of this attitude is evidently traceable to the influence that the *khitat* paradigm exerted on recent Egyptian historiography, not only on the level of information but also regarding structure and ideology. But the persistence of a particularist inclination is more surprising in Behrens-Abouseif's work than in that of other Egyptian authors. Unlike most of them, she is familiar with the work of Western historians, such as Michael Meinecke and J. M. Rogers, who have recently demonstrated the existence of an active architectural interaction between Islamic Egypt and other regions, both in the Islamic world and beyond. She even lists their articles in her bibliography. And, despite Behrens-Abouseif's reliance on Creswell's plans and architectural descriptions, little traces of his elaborate discussions of precedents and influences appear in her book. Even in the sections on pivotal structures whose architectural provenance is undoubtedly foreign, such as the Fatimid city gates and the complex of Sultan Qalawun, the author sum-



Houses of Cairo, as documented in the early-19th-century work, *La Description de L'Égypte*. (From *Islamic Architecture in Cairo*.)

marily diffuses scholarly debates on the sources of their structural and decorative elements by making generalizations of the common Byzantine heritage in the Eastern Mediterranean. This tendency to project an independent Egyptian architectural evolution throughout Cairo's history is troubling, for it affirms and perpetuates the antiquated epistemological construct in which self-conscious architectural identities (notably the Western one) can be interpreted to have developed with little indebtedness to external influences and interactions.

Thus, despite its accessibility to a Western audience, its chronological completeness (as opposed to Creswell's voluminous albums with their 1311 cut-off date), and its clarity of presentation and illustration—and perhaps because of all these positive characteristics—Behrens-Abouseif's *Islamic Architecture in Cairo* is a missed opportunity. It is unfortunate that it does not try to introduce Cairene architecture into the disciplinary discourses of either architecture or architectural history, precisely because it does not address their interest in formal connections and cultural linkages. To expect a single, introductory book to right the wrong propagated by long-established and partial epistemological structures, or to respond to the varied needs of different audiences, is clearly an exacting and excessive requirement. But the history of Cairene architecture still awaits a critical treatment that presents

architecture as a product of culture, history, and environment, that pursues explanations of historical phenomena beyond set boundaries, and that challenges the discipline of architectural history to integrate what has been left out in the continuous project of rewriting the history of architecture.

#### NOTES

1. The best source on the urban history of Cairo remains Janet Abu-Lughod's *Cairo: 1001 Years of the City Victorious* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971).
2. An illuminating discussion of the processes by which the Enlightenment constructed an exclusively European cultural evolution is Martin Bernal's *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization. Volume I: The Fabrication of Ancient Greece 1785–1985* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1987).
3. Claude Cahen, "Khitat," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2d. ed., vol. 5 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, ongoing), p. 22.
4. 'Ali Pasha Mubarak, *Al-Khitat al-Tawfiqiyya al-Jadida*, 20 vols. (Cairo, 1888–89).
5. See the discussion on the *khitat* genre in modern Egyptian historiography in Jack A. Crabbs, Jr., *The Writing of History in Nineteenth-Century Egypt* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1984), pp. 115–19.
6. See the introduction of Charles Coulston Gillispie and Michael Dewachter, eds., *Monuments of Egypt: The Napoleonic Edition: The Complete Archaeological Plates from La Description de l'Égypte* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987).
7. Pascal-Xavier Coste, *Architecture Arabe ou Monuments du Kaire mesurés et dessinés de 1818 à 1826* (Paris, 1839). For a recent appraisal of Coste's work, see the articles collected in Daniel Armogathe and Sylviane Leprun, *Pascal Coste ou*

*l'architecture cosmopolite* (Paris: Éditions l'Harmattan, 1990).

8. K. A. C. Creswell, *Muslim Architecture of Egypt*, 2 vols., and *Early Muslim Architecture*, 2 vols., 2d. ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959 and 1969).

9. See the analysis of J. M. Rogers, "Architectural History as Literature: Creswell's Reading and Methods," *Muqarnas* 8 (1991): 45–54.

10. Hasan 'Abdel-Wahab, *Tarikh al-Masajid al-Athariyya allati salla fiha faridhat al-jum'a hadret sahib al-jalala al-malik al-salih Farouq al-Awwal*, (Cairo, 1946); Su'ad Maher, *Masajid Misr wa Awliya'uha al-Salihun*, 3 vols. (Cairo, 1971). An earlier French survey of Cairo's mosques may have supplied another frame of reference to these books: Louis Hauteceur and Gaston Wiet, *Les mosquées du Caire*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1932).

11. Ahmad Fikri, *Masajid al-Qahira wa Madarisaha*, 3 vols. (Cairo, 1962–69). Farid Shafe'i, *Al-'Amara al-'Arabiyya fi Misr al-Islamiyya*, *Asr al-Wulat* (Cairo: Al-Hay'a al-Misriyya al-'Ammal lil-Ta'lif wal-Nashr, 1970), and *Al-'Amara al-'Arabiyya al-Islamiyya, Madiha wa-Hadiraha wa-Mustaqbalaha* (Riyadh, 1982); 'Abd al-Rahman Zaki, *Al-Qahira, Tarikhaha wa-Atharaha*, (Cairo, 1966), and *Mawsu'at Madinat al-Qahira fi Alf 'Am* (Cairo, 1969); Ahmad 'Abd al-Razzaq Ahmad, *Tarikh wa Athar Misr al-Islamiyya* (Cairo, 1977, reprint 1993).

12. For a list of some of these mistakes, see the book review by Caroline Williams, *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 29 (1992): 226–29.

ANNMARIE ADAMS

## North Oxford

*Tanis Hinchcliffe*

As architectural historians, we often think of Oxford, England, as a stunning array of university colleges, libraries, churches, and museums, designed by the “great masters” of English architecture: Christopher Wren, James Gibbs, Thomas Deane, and Benjamin Woodward, among others. The buildings surrounding Oxford, however, designed by unknown architects or anonymous builders, have received much less scholarly attention, overshadowed by the stature of their monumental neighbors. Tanis Hinchcliffe’s recent book, *North Oxford*, addresses this imbalance, while at the same time providing a skillful analysis of one of England’s most significant Victorian suburbs.

In eight chapters, ordered largely thematically, Hinchcliffe traces the complex relationship of St. John’s College, the owner and developer of the extensive property, to the romantic, Victorian domestic architecture and the various religious and educational institutions constructed between 1850 and 1930. Drawing on the methods of John Summerson, Donald Olsen, and H. J. Dyos, whose pioneering work in the 1960s laid the foundations for the history of suburbanization in England, Hinchcliffe sees the development of North Oxford as a product of dynamic social forces.

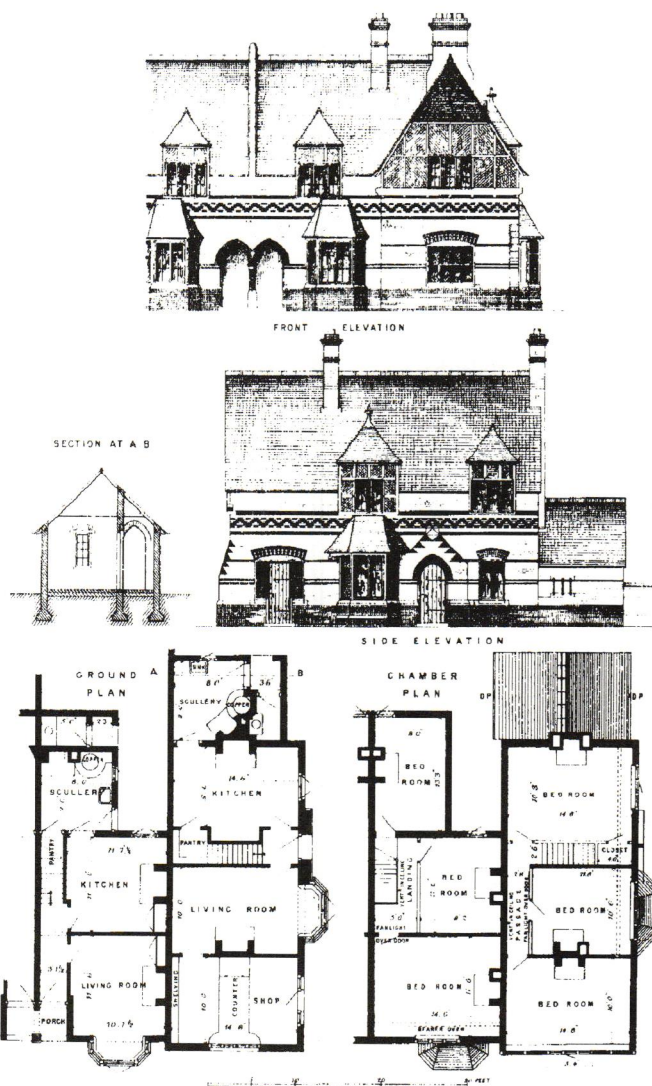
Indeed, one of the most important contributions of the book is its refreshingly interdisciplinary approach. In addition to the relevant secondary sources in urban and architectural history, such as those suggested above, the author is well versed in recent theoretical debates in the histories of

women, real estate, and banking, all of which have strengthened her multifaceted analysis of North Oxford architecture.

In the first two chapters, Hinchcliffe outlines the early history of St. John’s College since its founding in the 16th century. She also points out the unique relationship of “town and gown,” marked by a focus on luxury goods, the seasonal nature of university services, the absence of a substantial middle-class population because the colleges prohibited both their students and faculty

from marrying, and the general slow growth of Central Oxford due to the large land holdings of Oxford University. The railway, for example, was initially opposed by the university, greatly retarding the growth of manufacturing in the city.

Hinchcliffe’s unique perspective becomes more obvious in chapter three, which traces the beginnings of the urban and architectural development of North Oxford in the period 1860–83. Rather than seeing the history of the suburb wholly through the intentions of archi-



Hinchcliffe examines the plans, materials, and styles of North Oxford houses, revealing the cultural meanings within the social and political contexts of the community. A home on Kingston Road; Clapton Crabb Rolfe, 1870. (From *North Oxford*.)

pects commissioned by the college, or the middle-class inhabitants attracted to the place, or the reforms instituted by the college, which permitted dons to marry after 1871, Hinchcliffe explains North Oxford architecture through the availability of investment capital, the rise of a middle-class housing market, and access to labor. Her succinct explication of the complex English leasehold systems, the roles of building societies, speculators, architects, and builders operating within the system, and the relationship of the construction industry to changes in styles of banking is a tremendous addition to our understanding of late-19th-century domestic architecture.

In terms of formal analysis, the fifth chapter, "The Architecture of the North Oxford House," offers a solid examination of Victorian house planning and the cultural meanings of various architectural styles within the social and political contexts of the Oxford community. In this part of the book, the author's explanation of changes in middle-class preference from Italianate models, to Gothic Revival, Queen Anne, and Neo-Georgian styles is bolstered by superb technical descriptions of the houses and their materials. Particularly interesting in North Oxford was the number of houses designed for academics or entrepreneurs with political interests, expressed in the common inclusion of a separate study for these purposes.

Later in the book, Hinchcliffe uses census returns and leases to ascertain who lived in each house during which time periods, concluding that the extraordinary number of female heads of households impacted the architecture of North Oxford and encouraged the establishment of several women's institutions in the area. It is hoped that this comprehensive social map of the suburb will inspire more work on the relationship of family structure to domestic space.

Hinchcliffe's attention, however, is not restricted to life inside North Oxford's houses. The book's final two chapters concern social life in this middle-class suburb and the construction of institutions in North Oxford. Churches, schools, collective dwellings, and even other colleges were constructed and closely controlled by St. John's to conform to the residential character of the neighborhood. According to Hinchcliffe, these institutions were largely the result of social changes in middle-class life, including an increasing pluralism and tolerance within the Church of England. In this way, the author paints a picture of the middle-class suburb as a place of relatively experimental activity, rather than a den of conservatism, where new institutions flourished because of the opportunities and access to property offered in suburbia. "The suburb became a sort of Forest of Arden," Hinchcliffe explains, "where what could not find space at that time in the colleges was allowed to flourish."

Keble College was also among these relatively revolutionary institutions. Designed by William Butterfield in the 1870s, the new college was constructed for students of modest means, otherwise unable to attend Oxford. This attitude was reflected in the plan of the college, as Hinchcliffe remarks, whose circulation was based on the use of corridors, rather than traditional stairways, intended to encourage a more communal lifestyle. Butterfield's distinctive treatment of brick, in marked contrast to the fine stonework used in other Oxford colleges, expressed the political convictions of the new college and smoothed its acceptance in its suburban setting. As an example of the enormous amount of control exerted by St. John's College as developer, Hinchcliffe also notes the conditions of the sale of the site to Keble College. If the new college were to fall into the hands of the Church of Rome—a strong possibility,

given the Tractarian leanings of the Keble group—the site would return to St. John's.

*North Oxford* is a significant model for other detailed studies of individual suburbs. It has one hundred illustrations, including many site and building plans and twenty beautiful color photographs. In addition to students of architectural and urban history, the book will interest anyone drawn to the histories of women, domestic life, real estate, and economics. It will also inspire the thousands who flock to Oxford each year to admire the city's architecture to notice the buildings between the monuments. They, too, have stories to tell.

ROBERT GILKEY DYCK

## The Universality of Jože Plečnik

The incredible versatility of Jože Plečnik is again the subject of new books by Peter Krečič, an art and architecture historian and a leading authority on the Slovenian architect. The recently published *Plečnik: The Complete Works* is the first fully comprehensive monograph in English on Plečnik's life and work. Its broad purpose is to examine the architect's methodology by formally analyzing the constituent architectural elements of his work, and the ways in which they are synthesized. This is an important undertaking because Plečnik has emerged in recent years (at least to English-speaking readers) as one of the most important architects of the Wagnerschule, with significant works in Vienna, Prague, Ljubljana, and elsewhere in Slovenia and the former Yugoslavia.

Plečnik's versatility goes hand-in-hand with the controversy that his designs engendered. He considered himself necessarily both an eclectic and a classicist. Drawing inspiration from many sources, he developed a personal style that comprised a novel synergy of form that was much more than a mixture of styles. In this sense, he was a modernist. He was also deeply committed to the design of a more humane, legible environment, even though legibility depends in part on the ability of

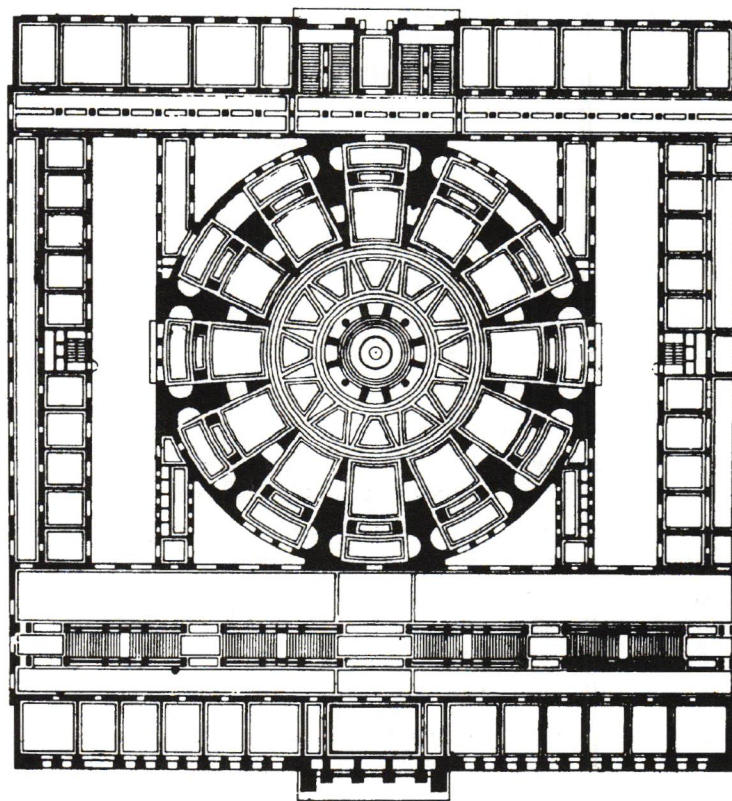
people to "read" and identify with traditional forms. Plečnik's versatility was not only a function of his mastery of formal vocabularies drawn from all over Europe (which may be seen in his multiculturalist approach to the Žale Cemetery in Ljubljana), but also of his ability to develop unique design solutions depending on the context of the design and the differing needs of his clients. For example, although Plečnik's best-known church designs have certain recognizable formal similarities, they are also remarkably different in spatial organization, symmetry/asymmetry, and scale. A comparison of his interior designs for the Šiška Church of St. Francis in Ljubljana, Church of St. Michael in Barje (near Ljubljana), and Church of the Ascension in Bogojina makes the point most eloquently.

The range of Plečnik's design interests, from city-scale urban planning to the crafting of door handles, votive

lamps, chalices, and graphics, is also extraordinary. Krečič documents these various interests with copious drawings and photographs, many in full color. Previously published, smaller black-and-white photos do not do justice to these designs. Krečič shows that many of the small objects, including the chalices, are essentially miniature architectural designs displaying the same formal dynamics as Plečnik's buildings. A complete description and analysis of all known chalices designed by Plečnik for the Catholic liturgy is contained in another new book, *Plečnikovi Kelih* (Plečnik's Chalices). The text, by Krečič, appears in Slovene, German, and English, and is accompanied by a catalog of objects curated by Rok Kvaternik, portrayed in lovely full-page photographs taken by Edvard Primožič.

In *Plečnik: The Complete Works*, Krečič commendably identifies the derivatives of Plečnik's formal vocabulary, including

citations of specific historical precedents for design ideas and forms. The more personal dimensions of Plečnik's approach to design synthesis are understandably more elusive, but the author does convey his general priorities with respect to functionality, form, materials, structure, volumetric contrast, and the uses of light. If Plečnik's students were less successful in carrying on his tradition, it was probably because they looked more to his uniquely personal forms than to the design processes by which they were derived. The book thus provides a useful point of departure for continuing study by design students, professional architects, planners, and architectural historians.

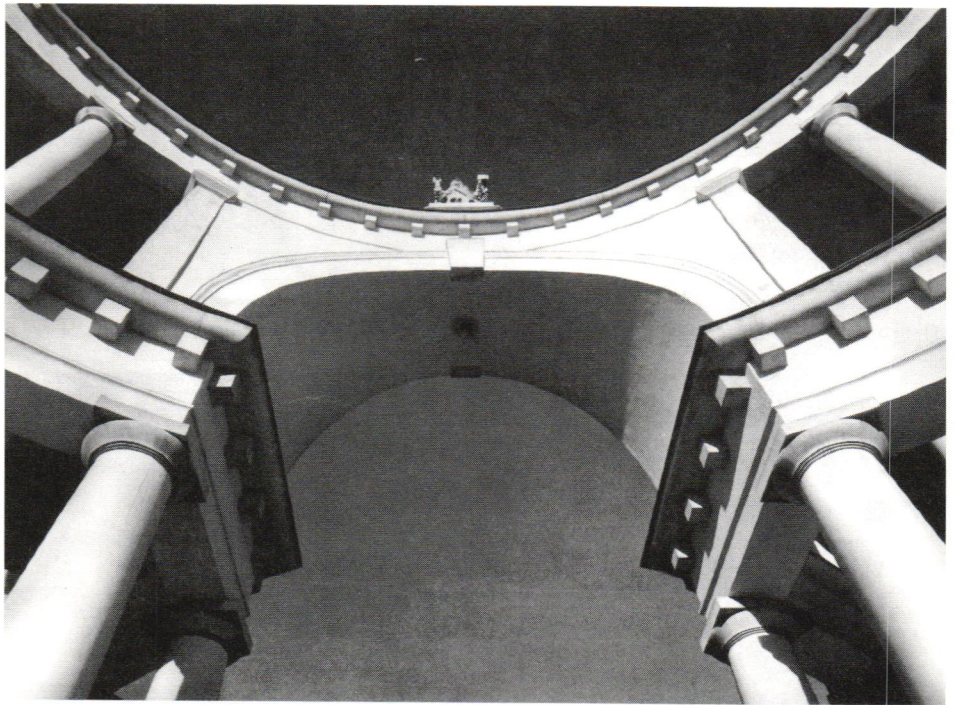


Plan of Slovene Parliament Building, Ljubljana, Slovenia; Jože Plečnik, 1947.  
(From *Plečnik: The Complete Works*.)



Krečič also succeeds in helping to locate Plečnik in the context of Wagner-schule theories of architecture and regionalism, after Otto Wagner. For example, Plečnik does not follow Wagner's strongly articulated rejection of eclecticism, but does share with him a concern for the impact of the machine age on the arts-and-crafts tradition. Plečnik demonstrates his capacity for modern structural innovation in his design for the crypt of the Church of the Holy Spirit (Ottakring, Vienna, 1910–13), but does not allow his vision of absolute form to be constrained by construction technology. Unlike Wagner, whom Plečnik came to view more as an engineer than an architect, Plečnik subordinates structure and materials to form. Increasingly, Plečnik came to believe that the absolute (symbolizing the “eternal”) in art and architecture could only be achieved in church architecture; he rejected Wagner's “astylistic” approach to religious work and tried to develop one that would simultaneously maintain religious values, improve the functioning of the liturgy, and democratize the service by bringing the clergy and the laity into closer spatial proximity.

Wagner believed that designs ought to express regional influences, if in a minor way (mainly in terms of materials and climate), while Plečnik felt obliged to express his Slavic heritage in his architectural forms and composition. Krečič shows how Plečnik understood his famous Zacherl house in Vienna as a building produced for his native Slovenia and for Slovenska Moderna, a group of artists interested in the establishment of a national cultural and artistic identity for Slovenia. The author also demonstrates how Plečnik continued to develop his unique design approach for the restoration at Prague Castle, with the express purpose of celebrating the emergence of a new democratic Slavic republic in Czechoslovakia; and how his later work in Slovenia was inspired by



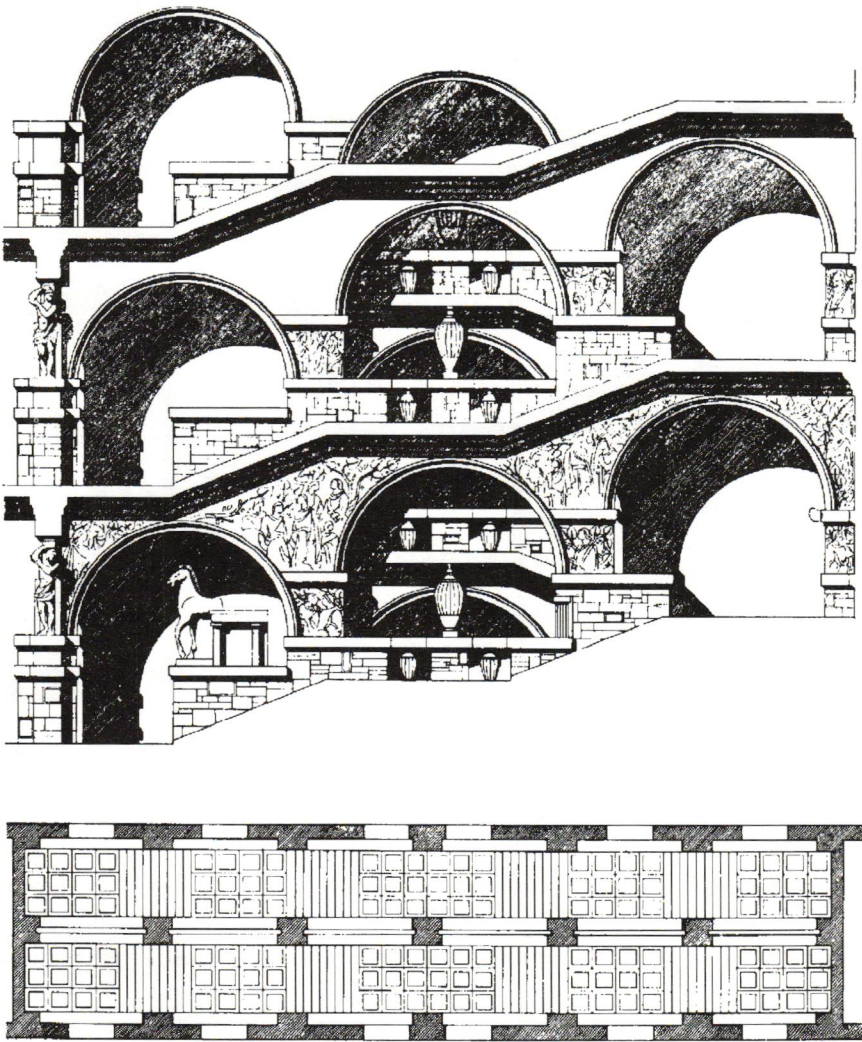
Detail of the main gateway at the Zale Cemetery, Ljubljana, Slovenia; Jože Plečnik, 1938–40. (From *Arhitekt Jože Plečnik*.)

his desire to combine southern Mediterranean influences, Slovene rustic traditions, and northern mystical traditions to produce a truly universal (as opposed to merely nationalistic) architecture. In this way, Plečnik also helped set the stage for a reconsideration of modern architecture, taking into account the previously overlooked contributions of smaller central European countries, including Slovenia, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary.

*Plečnik: The Complete Works* is handsomely presented with an extensive text that, with a few exceptions, reads easily. For the most part, the material is presented chronologically, showing the evolution of Plečnik's work in the three different countries where he lived. In some instances, more illustrative material and less text would have better served the reader, especially when words are used to describe an image that can only be understood visually. This is partly due to a 223-page reduction from the original Slovenian version of the book, *Jože Plečnik*, in which the text is more thoroughly illustrated than its

English-language edition. The description of Plečnik's plans for Ljubljana is difficult to follow geographically, even for someone familiar with the city, because of the absence of legible maps and diagrams. Another problem with the translation is that it inadvertently but consistently designates St. Jakob's Square as St. James Square.

The original Slovenian-language monograph was released with considerable fanfare by its Ljubljana publisher on May 19, 1992, an event that was preceded by a gala opening reception at Ljubljana's Narodna Galerija (National Gallery) for a special exhibit organized by Krečič and the Arhitekturni Muzej Ljubljana (Architectural Museum of Ljubljana), for which he serves as director. The exhibit was designed to explore commonalities in the work of Plečnik and Antonio Gaudí, and was financially supported by the Catalan and Slovene ministries of culture. On May 20, the 1986 Paris exhibition of Plečnik's work was put on permanent display in newly renovated Fužine Castle (located on the



Project for a staircase, Ljubljana Castle; Jože Plečnik, c. 1946. (From *Jože Plečnik, Architect: 1872–1957*.)

outskirts of Ljubljana), also celebrated with a gala reception. These events were timed to coordinate with the 17th International Congress of ICSID (International Council of Societies of Industrial Design), whose secretariat initiated the Plečnik-Gaudí exhibit. That a newly formed nation of only two million could both graciously host and truly integrate internationally significant design events in this way, particularly in the backwash of continuing fighting in Bosnia-Herzegovina, was not only remarkable in itself but a bright omen for Slovenia's role in an increasingly design- and environment-sensitive world. Coincidentally, the events provided an occasion for Slovenia to exhibit its national pride

in its most famous artistic hero, whose career was built in no small way on his desire to establish a regional architectural identity for his country.

According to Krečič, the methodological approach adopted for the book was that of the Viennese school of architectural history, of “reading forms” as taught by his principal mentor, Nace Šumi at the University of Ljubljana. He began the book with modest intentions, but the complexity of Plečnik's approach and the ever-present tension between classical and modern architectural ideas—apparent in most of his projects—led to a much more lengthy analysis than originally intended. Still, the author insists that the book should by no

means be regarded as a definitive compendium of Plečnik's works, even though the bulk of its analysis serves to demonstrate his overwhelming contribution as a modernist—a conclusion shared by this reviewer.

The original publication provides many photographs and drawings that were previously inaccessible; their variety and richness are quite remarkable. Although the text is in Slovene, summaries in English and German are included, as well as a chronological bibliography and an index (not included in the newer, abridged version). The first half of the English summary is also available in *Plečnik's Ljubljana*, a slim booklet published as a visitors' guide to the city in 1991, for which Krečič originally wrote it. The booklet also has a discussion of Plečnik's contribution to urban design in Ljubljana. Especially notable is Krečič's observation that Plečnik and Andrea Palladio are in many ways kindred spirits, superficially classical, yet modernist in their inventive and unique application of classical forms. The final chapter of Krečič's *Plečnik: The Complete Works* presents essentially the same summary.

*Plečnik's Ljubljana* is a handy guide to the architect's major works in Ljubljana, similar in some ways to the English-language catalog *Jože Plečnik 1872–1957: Architecture and the City*, prepared in 1983 for a seminal RIBA exhibit by several authors, including Ian Bentley, Durdica Grzan-Butina, Richard Andrews, and Nace Šumi, as well as Krecic. *Plečnik's Ljubljana* does not treat his urban design contribution to the city as thoroughly as *Jože Plečnik 1872–1957*, but nearly all of its small photo prints are in color, whereas all of the photos in the RIBA book are black and white. The pamphlet-guide also includes a more complete selection of Plečnik's important buildings in Ljubljana, each of which is accompanied by concise commentary in addition to at least one photo. A colored map of the city designating the location

of the buildings makes *Plečnik's Ljubljana* especially useful.

*Antonio Gaudí and Jože Plečnik: Parallels* was stimulated by Austrian critic Friedrich Achleitner's description of Plečnik as a Slavic Gaudí during the 1986 Plečnik exhibition at the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris. In response to this, author Damjan Prelovšek provides a short but informative commentary on the lives and work of the two architects, showing that they almost certainly knew nothing about each other, despite their partially concurrent careers. The photographs and furniture selected for the exhibit by the Barcelona Centre de Disseny and the Arhitekturni Muzej Ljubljana succeed in showing some strikingly parallel designs based perhaps on the similar craft origins, spiritual orientation, national consciousness, and improvisational capabilities of the two men, despite their contradictory outlooks on Gothic and Greek classical models.

*Jože Plečnik: Architect, 1872–1957* was published in paperback by MIT Press in 1992, presumably to render the material in the original French edition—the catalog for the 1986 Plečnik exhibition—and MIT's 1989 cloth edition more accessible to an English-speaking audience. It presents an excellent summary of Plečnik's life and work, with twelve essays (written by almost as many different authors), supplemented with a portfolio of drawings and photographs (many in color).

Prelovšek (who wrote the text of the Plečnik-Gaudí book) contributes an insightful biography of the architect's life and work, which comprises nearly a quarter of the entire volume. Most of the other essays provide commentary on Plečnik's output, and several are especially informative regarding his regionalism, such as those by Friedrich Achleitner, Edo Ravnikar, Vladimir Šlapeta, and François Burkhardt. Achleitner praises Plečnik's up-to-date approach to regionalism in terms of the practical adaptation

of regional forms often ignored by orthodox functionalists; it is Plečnik's search for a regional and national architectural identity that leads Achleitner to compare him with Gaudí. Ravnikar asserts that the theories of German architect Gottfried Semper, to which Wagner adhered throughout his career, were in fundamental contradistinction to the regional values of Plečnik because they expressed the ideology of the Austro-Hungarian power center. Šlapeta discusses Plečnik's contribution to the distinctive Slavic atmosphere of Prague Castle. And Burkhardt traces Plečnik's declaration of regional identity to 1910, based on stylistic and construction motifs he found in the Julian Alps, a mountainous region northwest of Ljubljana.

The book also contains two valuable photoessays. The first, by Boris Podrecca, helps readers to understand how Plečnik's use of columns, walls, and space is a way of symbolizing the continuity of human community through time, which is wholly different from simply proposing a return to the past. The second photoessay, by Lucius Burkhardt and Linde Burkhardt, is a pictorial analysis of several of the walking tours of Ljubljana created by Plečnik. At the simplest level, the tours were meant for the pure pleasure of pedestrians, but they also constituted a system of functional and aesthetic organization with visual cues that predated Kevin Lynch's work on "imageability." At still another level, Plečnik wanted to symbolize his aspirations for Ljubljana as a political and Catholic capital, doing so in the dynamic and fragmentary form of promenades that would challenge residents and visitors to invent their own visions of the future of the city.

The wealth of recent publications on Plečnik provides comprehensive documentation of his life's work, and opens his *oeuvre* to cross-disciplinary inspection: the works will obligate architectural historians to consider not only the work

of Plečnik, but that of his lesser-known contemporaries in central Europe, such as the Hungarian architects Ödön Lechner and Károly Kós. They will also be of interest to practitioners, for they clearly convey Plečnik's mastery of architectural detail and craftsmanship, which was so tied to his belief in the larger importance of architectural and urban design as a stimulant and container for civic and religious community; and, beyond the analyses, nonspecialists will appreciate the books for presenting the sense of the timelessness, reverence, and renewal of Plečnik's work.

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PLEČNIK: THE COMPLETE WORKS, Peter Krečič, Whitney Library of Design (an imprint of Watson-Guptill Publications), 1993, 256 pp., illus., \$65.00.

PLEČNIKOVI KELIHI, Peter Krečič, Rok Kvaternik, and Edvard Primožič, Rokus (Ljubljana, Slovenia), 1993, 147 pp., illus., about \$76.00.

JOŽE PLEČNIK, Peter Krečič, Državna Založba Slovenije (Ljubljana, Slovenia), 1992, 479 pp., illus., about \$100.00.

PLEČNIK'S LJUBLJANA, Peter Krečič, DELO for Cankarjeva Založba (Ljubljana, Slovenia), 1991, 80 pp., illus., about \$5.50.

JOŽE PLEČNIK 1872–1957: ARCHITECTURE AND THE CITY, Ian Bentley, Durdica Grzan-Butina, editors, Joint Center for Urban Design, Oxford Polytechnical School, 1983, illus., \$7.50.

ANTONI GAUDÍ AND JOŽE PLEČNIK: PARALLELS, Peter Krečič, editor, text by Damjan Prelovšek, Tiskarna Simčič (Ljubljana, Slovenia), 1992, 32 pp., illus., about \$6.25.

JOŽE PLEČNIK, ARCHITECT: 1872–1957, François Burkhardt, Claude Eveno, and Boris Podrecca, editors, MIT Press, 1992 (original cloth edition, 1989), 204 pp., illus., \$16.95.

STAN ALLEN

**Casa Malaparte***Marida Talamona*

Manure heaps constructed of oak do  
not breed snakes.

—Leon Battista Alberti,  
Book V, *On the Art of Building*  
in *Ten Books*

Myths seem to accumulate around the Casa Malaparte, built on the island of Capri for writer Cuzio Malaparte from 1938 to 1942. A spectacular site, an enigmatic client, and an unprecedented formal construction all contribute to the aura that surrounds the house. It is no accident that Jean-Luc Godard chose to make the house and its site the setting for a filmed reenactment of Homer's *Odyssey* in a segment in his 1963 movie *Le Mépris* (The Contempt). Capri, for Godard, represented "the ancient world, nature before civilization and its neuroses."<sup>1</sup>

Marida Talamona has dismantled some of these myths, but perhaps has provided material for some new ones. His study, *Casa Malaparte*, raises many interesting questions, some of which may be overshadowed by the book's central claim, simply stated on the jacket: "Talamona uncovers evidence attributing the design of the house to the client (writer Curzio Malaparte) rather than the architect (Adalberto Libera)." But this issue is quickly defused in the introduction by architectural historian Giorgio Ciucci, who puts this question in perspective while arguing against the "sensationalist" interpretation that such an "about-face" might produce. "The only point is that we are no longer in the position to assert that the villa is exclusively Libera's work," Ciucci states, going on to say that "it is precisely the

possibility of multiple textual interpretations, plus the variety of players on the scene, that make any simplistic hypothesis unsatisfactory."<sup>2</sup> To his credit, Talamona, having called Libera's authorship into question, does not fall into his own trap by indulging in a simple game of substitutions. Would our fundamental idea of the house—as an artifact in the world—really be changed if we could answer the question of attribution with certainty? Perhaps we might stipulate at the outset that Talamona's case for the decisive contribution of Malaparte is convincing, and pass on to other questions raised by the author's careful scholarship and clear presentation.

One of these questions has been the lingering sense of uneasiness which Libera's embrace of fascism produces in those of us who admire his work. In Libera's architecture, functionalist clarity, a stripped monumental classicism, and the identification with nature are all marshalled to produce an intense effect on the observer that cannot be disentangled from the political framework under which they were realized. Malaparte is all the more difficult to pin down in this regard. At one time an ardent supporter of Mussolini, he was later jailed and exiled by the dictator. After the war, he became a Communist party member, and willed the villa to the writer's union of the People's Republic of China (despite his last-minute conversion to Catholicism). In this case, to highlight Malaparte's contribution is to question the simplistic equation of fascist politics and fascist aesthetics. The house was to serve as a private refuge, and is hence individual and personal, yet it had to take its place in a monumental landscape, and is hence timeless and universal. It is at once vernacular and classical, modern and archaic. The extent to which the villa is able to negotiate these paradoxes testifies to the compactness and clarity of its architecture. "The day I started building a house, I did not know I

would draw a picture of myself," writes Malaparte. If we take seriously the idea of the villa as a "self-portrait in stone," what are the lines of its "moral face"? And how are these reconciled with the vision of everyday life, sketched out in the architecture and program of the house?

It is possible to outline three interrelated themes: the willed construction of romantic arcadianism on the site; a formal aesthetic poised between figure and abstraction (a mythical and poetic "magical realism"); and the heroic effort to keep at bay the alienating effects of everyday life.<sup>3</sup> Above all it seems that the backdrop of World War II must be recognized as decisive, not only for the distance it imposed on the author, who wrote from Helsinki, Zagreb, Florence, and Rome for news of the construction; or for the long and difficult time of realization (which allowed for reflection and modification); but for a sense of urgency and clarity, a distancing and stripping away of nonessentials that the experience of war demanded. The villa was to be a home to return to after extended exile, yet it possesses none of the comforting clichés of cozy domesticity. "The house must have a hard character," wrote Malaparte, "like a prison almost, like a fortress." Unlike futurist F. T. Marinetti, who reveled in the formal beauty of the machines of destruction, Malaparte took from his wartime experience the spirit of discipline and asceticism, which he raised to a poetic principle.

Nearly everyone who has written about the house has noted Malaparte's cryptic statement to Field Marshal Erwin Rommel. Visiting the writer in Capri before the battle of El Alamein, Rommel asked whether the house was already built when he bought it, or whether he built it himself. "I replied—and it was not true—that I had bought the house as it stood. And pointing with a sweeping gesture to the sheer cliff of Matromania, the three gigantic

rocks of the Faraglioni, the Sorrento peninsula, the islands of the Sirens, the distant blue of the Amalfi coastline, and the remote golden glimmer of the Paestum shores, I said: 'I designed the scenery.'" More than a witty comment to a passing visitor, this remark could be taken for an exact truth. To say this is to propose that Casa Malaparte not be understood as a designed artifact, marked by the hand of the architect, but rather as something found, and belonging to the place. The intervention of the artist lies in the ability to make visible the monumental and arca-dian order of nature as it already exists. This inversion represents the funda-mental aesthetic basis of the house. It is

both of the site, and, as a man-made artifact, necessarily distinct from it. The site is only made visible through its condensation and abstraction in the form of the house.

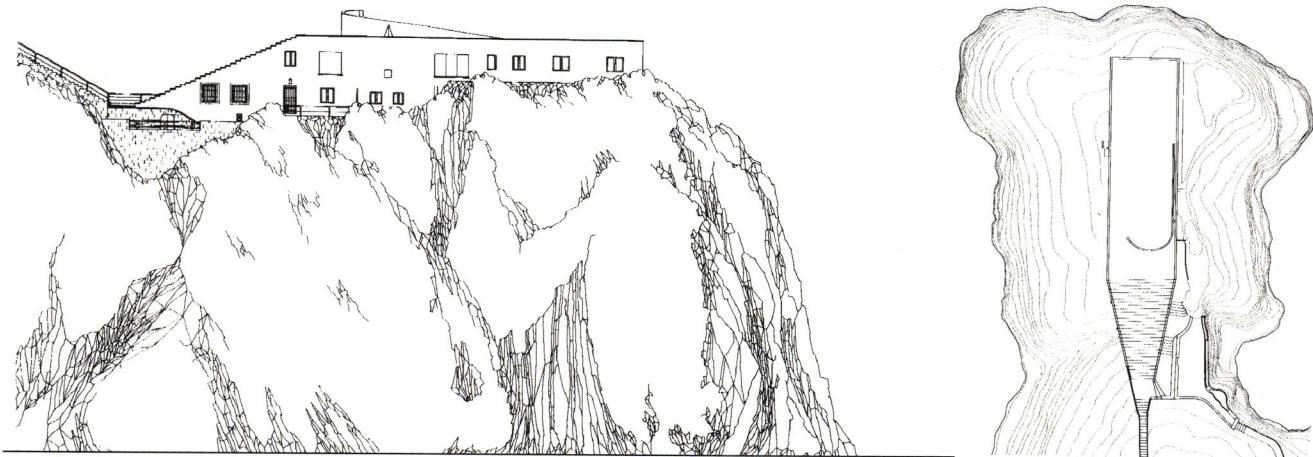
On the island of Lipari, where he had been exiled in the early 1930s, Malaparte had experienced the harsh realities of untamed nature: "Too much sea, too much sky, for such a small island, and such a restless soul. The horizon is too broad, I drown in it. I am a photograph, a painting too small for such a big frame." Talamona suggests that during those months of exile, a notion of "poetry and art as expres-sions of total freedom and moral inde-pendence against nature's violence

upon man and power's violence upon the individual" took shape. Significantly one of the primary gestures on the site is the construction of a new horizon, an expansive yet measured space from which to scan the surrounding land-scape. Malaparte reconciles the modern and the classical by underlining the ori-gins of surrealism in the Mediterranean landscape: "All of Italian civilization from the Etruscans on is surrealist. It is a civilization that knows the limits of nature, interprets nature with irony, corrects nature's deficient fantasy."<sup>4</sup> Nature, even as it defines essential terms for art, must be given meaning by culture.

Another paradox of the design of the villa is its ambiguous character, which fluxes between figure and abstraction. If its abstract nature is tied to the arche-typal character of the site, a geometric "correction" of nature's order, then its iconic character is intimately tied to its status as a cultural object. Yet, as a cul-tural artifact, it is curiously difficult to locate. John Hejduk has compared the plan of the villa to an Egyptian prayer paddle: "The plan of the Malaparte house is an inscription."<sup>5</sup> Perhaps this strange condition emerges directly as a result of the intersection of the highly self-conscious and aestheticized knowl-edge of the writer, with the unself-con-scious know-how of master mason, Ciro Amitrano. That is to say, Malaparte's aesthetic sensibility was highly devel-oped, but he had not been trained in the normative codes (and prohibitions) of architecture. The master mason, on the other hand, retains a knowledge of con-struction and familiarity with conven-tional techniques and recognizable forms. With Amitrano, work was car-ried out directly on site, without the mediation of measured drawings. One of the most striking documents in the book is a photograph of the half-finished site with the form of the house scratched in over the photograph. This way of working directly on the iconic



Writes Giorgio Ciucci in the introduction, "Suppose the architect of Casa Malaparte [built 1938–42], always considered to be Adalberto Libera, were in fact none other than Curzio Malaparte himself. . . . Many critical hypotheses, based only on Libera's presumed authorship of the house, would be in question, and writing short captions for illustrations would become a problem." (From *Casa Malaparte*.)



Reconstructed drawings of the design of the house at the time of Malaparte's death in 1957: southwest view (left) and general layout (right). (From *Casa Malaparte*.)

form of the house, crude and “improper” from the point of view of conventional architectural practice (and an expedient to which Malaparte turned more than once), is characteristic of the building's construction. Talamona introduces material documenting a process of construction marked by continual and significant changes made on the fabric of the building throughout its realization (and long after Libera had ceased contact with the work). In my opinion, all of the villa's most extraordinary features—the stairs, the glass-walled firebox, the symmetries and doublings—seem to have more to do with this hands-on collaboration than with Talamona's idea of the house as a kind of academic recall of the *domus* type. This propitious combination of articulate client and master mason may be the only way to account for not only the work's startling freshness and total lack of clichés, but, more importantly, the uncanny sense of déjà-vu provoked by the villa, the surreal effect of familiar forms in unfamiliar relationships.

There is another intriguing aspect of the documentation that is made available in the book. If the writer Malaparte was not an expert in construction, he was, it could be said, an expert in everyday life. In a letter written to his caretaker in 1941 as work on the house was finishing, Malaparte includes, along with

instructions to the carpenter and the upholsterer, a whole series of “trivial” domestic specifications:

18.) Cover the prosciutto with gauze to prevent the horseflies from landing on it.

21.) Keep an eye on Cerrotta with regard to the pig. The idiot is capable of letting him die of hunger. Go and visit Guglielmo [the pig] every so often.

22.) If the prosciutto goes bad, eat it.

23.) Try to leave one of the two wheels of Croatian lard for me.

32.) Try to always be dressed either with an apron (have them made in white or green or red or blue, etc.) or with the Croation outfit. The apron must be wide and long. You don't listen to me but you look much better like that. You have a bit of a habit of going around the house dressed God knows how.

33.) Hire a woman to wash the heavy laundry.

34.) Have coal delivered to the house. Stock up on wood. There must always be a lot of wood. You can call the owner of the campanile restaurant, Maria's husband, Mr. Cannavale. He is the one who sells wood. Don't rely on Ciro's laziness, he always says “tomorrow.”

To make a definitive case for Malaparte's authorship, we might say that the architect is precisely the one who doesn't worry if the prosciutto goes bad. What is the place of these domestic arts and local

know-how in the high-art discipline of architecture? How can a reliable border be drawn between these “properly” architectural concerns and the banal questions of everyday life? Architecture, as Alberti understood perfectly well, always entails an intersection of the mythological and the trivial.

Godard, too, understood the villa as a place where the everyday and the timeless might coexist in strange and improper proximities. Aside from the building's striking visual character, which Godard uses to great effect in *Le Mépris*, it might be said that the architecture of the villa mirrors the architecture of the film. The plot revolves around a simple domestic tragedy—the precipitate breakup of a reluctant screenwriter's marriage, filmed by Godard without an ounce of pathos—set against the mythological backdrop of a film of the *Odyssey* being shot by director Fritz Lang, who plays himself. The house functions like a hinge between the timeless world of archaic myth and the countless modern banalities of everyday life. The structure of tragedy reasserts itself in spite of the trivialities of the present; the marital complications and petty affairs prove fatal to the protagonists. The director wrote, “When I think about it, *Le Mépris* seems to me, beyond the psychological study of a woman who despises her husband, the story of cast-

aways of the Western world, survivors of the shipwreck of modernity who, like the heroes of [Jules] Verne or [Robert Louis] Stevenson, one day reach a mysterious deserted island, whose mystery is the inexorable lack of mystery, of the truth, that is to say.”<sup>6</sup> Malaparte, himself a kind of “survivor of the shipwreck of modernity,” constructs a promiscuous relation of the everyday and the mythical. He, too, collapses the timeless and the trivial with a clarity whose “mystery is the inexorable lack of mystery.” It is a vision that would be immensely frightening were it not so fragile.

## NOTES

1. *Godard on Godard*, Tom Milne, trans. and ed. (New York: Da Capo Press, 1972), p. 200.
2. Without detracting from the value of this careful book, it might be useful to point out that it consists of an article-length essay, fleshed out with a preface, introduction, and documentary material. Although the book contains much previously unpublished material, the documentation of the villa itself does not substantially enlarge upon what is already available (See *AA Files* 18 [Fall 1986] and *Lotus* 60 [1988]). The letters and construction correspondence are of great interest. The drawings, while presumably accurate, are not absolutely convincing graphically and are reproduced too small. The photographs, too, are unique but badly organized and reproduced.
3. See Alice Yaeger Kaplan, *Reproductions of Banality: Fascism, Literature and French Intellectual Life* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1986) for a thorough discussion of the problem of the everyday in relation to fascism during World War II.
4. The reading of the villa in relation to European surrealism in general and Italian metaphysical poetry and painting specifically is developed in Vittorio Savi's “Orphic, Surrealistic: Casa Malaparte in Capri and Adalberto Libera,” *Lotus* 60 (Milan, 1988): 7–32.
5. John Hejduk, “Cable From Milan” in *Masque of Medusa* (New York: Rizzoli, 1985), p. 93; first published in *Domus* 605 (April 1980).
6. *Godard on Godard*, p. 201.

CASA MALAPARTE, Marida Talamona, introduction by Giorgio Ciucci, Princeton Architectural Press, 163 pp., illus., \$14.95.

JAYNE MERKEL

## Miami: Architecture of the Tropics

*Maurice Culot and  
Jean-François Lejeune, Editors*

Miami today is a little like Los Angeles in the 1920s—young, venturesome, percolating with energy, and brimming with opportunity as it invents a new kind of urbanity for North America. Like LA, Miami is a crazy, sun-kissed city on the edge, both geographically and culturally. A virtual swamp until 1896, when the railroad arrived, Miami remained a sleepy Southern outpost with a resort attached until 1959, when waves of Cuban émigrés fleeing Castro transformed it, almost overnight, into a cosmopolitan, bilingual, international crossroads of the Anglo and Latin Americas. With more unrest in the Caribbean, South and Central America, and increasing movement toward the sunbelt in the United States, Miami's population boomed—the area went from forty-second to eleventh in the country in population size—and its economy trebled accordingly. Building followed on an unprecedented scale even for a place that had always grown in cycles of feast and famine. More square footage was constructed in five years in the 1980s than in the previous eighty-five years combined. And the city fathers, buoyed by the boom, decided to do it right. They brought in the best-known architects in the country: Philip Johnson/John Burgee; I. M. Pei & Partners; Skidmore, Owings & Merrill; Hugh Stubbins; RTKL; Pietro Belluschi; Hellmuth, Obata and Kassabaum; Cambridge 7; Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown; John Andrews; and Benjamin Thompson.

But, as had happened in LA earlier, a

vital, original, local avant-garde emerged. Soon, the work of four young, talented Ivy League-trained architects, who were teaching at the University of Miami's School of Architecture, eclipsed that of these more established firms. The husband-wife teams of Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, who practice together in their namesake firm, and Bernardo Fort-Brescia and Laurinda Spear, who head Arquitectonica, based vibrant new work on indigenous traditions, attracted international critical attention, and made Miami a center of cutting-edge design.

The two couples founded Arquitectonica together in 1977 but went their separate ways—legally, stylistically, and philosophically—a few years later. Arquitectonica produces a festive, original brand of neomodernism with bright colors, fluid shapes, bold juxtapositions, and solids played off against voids, mostly in individual buildings. Duany Plater-Zyberk (DPZ) create good, old-fashioned, postmodern residential subdivisions and new towns like Seaside, Florida, with traditional imagery and planning practices—clapboard or stucco houses with gabled roofs, shutters, and walled gardens maintaining street lines. The two approaches could not be further apart. They occupy opposite poles, expanding the perimeters of the wide-open Miami architectural scene but also causing some tensions within it.

Tensions typify this city of extremes, where warm sunny days can turn into ferocious hurricanes, where a throbbing Latin beat jars the languid South, and where vacationers sometime encounter ruthless violence. But the scary side of Miami life—where colliding cultures and customs create an uneasiness that also gives the city its character and inspires its most audacious architectural expression—is, unfortunately, deemphasized in *Miami: Architecture of the Tropics*.

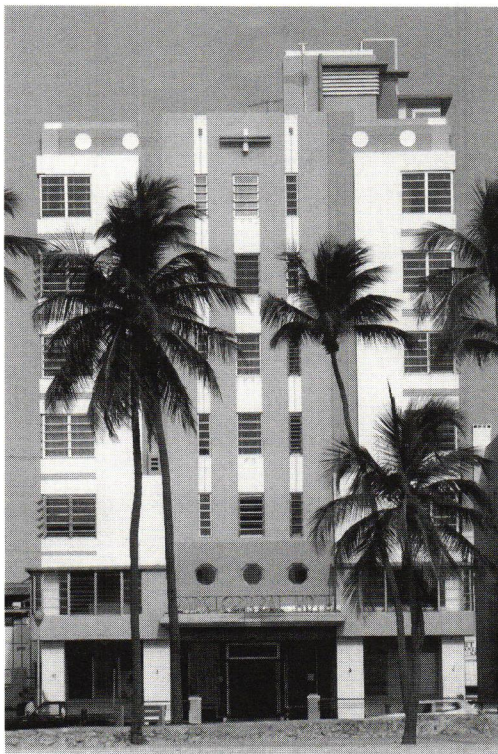
Rather than describe all of Miami's

inconsistent elements in orderly, detached detail, the book's editors, Maurice Culot and Jean-François Lejeune, use a curious mix of travel-brochure photographs, quirky little figurative sketches, plans and maps, old postcards, academic renderings, and modern line drawings—in all sizes—to provide an upbeat impression of the place. Readers unfamiliar with Miami will probably come to know it the way I know Houston, which I visited only once, for a weekend, as the guest of friends who had moved there not long before. They drove me around enthusiastically, took me to their favorite spots, and introduced me to a few interesting and opinionated architect friends who told me about their own work, their ideas, and their adopted hometown.

Although *Miami: Architecture of the Tropics* pictures buildings by fifty-eight different architects, two-thirds of whom are contemporary, it concentrates on the work of Duany and Plater-Zyberk—even on their work in other parts of the state—and their friends and followers. There is a section on Seaside, in the Florida panhandle, and another on their village of Windsor in Vero Beach, a hundred miles north of Miami. Thirty-five illustrations depict works by DPZ; only four show those of Arquitectonica—an even smaller selection than that which represents the work of Trelles Architects, Jorge Hernandez, Kenneth Treister, Charles Harrison Pawley, Scott Merrill or Teofilo Victoria, and Maria de La Guardia, all of whom speak a postmodern tongue.

The book contains four lively essays by different authors: Caroline Mierop's "Transatlantic," coeditor Culot's "Blows to the Heart and Fleeting Impressions," Duany and Plater-Zyberk's "The Three Traditions of Miami," and coeditor Lejeune's "Dreams of Cities."

"It is a collective effort," as Mierop explains, "of a handful of architects and



Park Central Hotel, Ocean Drive, Miami Beach, Florida; Henry Hohausser, 1937. (From *Miami: Architecture of the Tropics*.)

city-lovers, of Europeans from over here and from over there, brought together by chance friendships, shared experiences and beliefs. . . . The book is an homage to the New World, to the founding of cities, and specifically to Miami, nearly a century in the building and still under construction along that precarious line between terra firma and swampland, nature and artifice, the metropolis and the province, business and leisure, between myth and the *faits divers*, North and South, vice and virtue." All the authors note the contrasts, but none systematically investigates their impact on architecture. The authors' "shared experiences and beliefs" provide a consistent point of view, but create redundancies.

Mierop and Culot, both Belgian architects, muse on the city they came to love while teaching at the University of Miami. Culot's romantic and fact-filled account of his personal odyssey makes a good travel guide. Observes Mierop,

"What a European who comes to Miami . . . can find [is] a garden city idealism, the uncompromising spirit of the avant-garde, a hint of classical elegance together with Caribbean color, light, and shadow. . . . The debates about *faux-vieux* [authentic reproductions], copies and pastiche, that become so heated and conclusive among architects in Europe . . . have no place in Miami. The entire city is meant to be a quote from the past; it integrates all the references, all the models that come together to forge its true identity."

The same could be said of Los Angeles, of course—the birthplace of Disneyland and the movie set. The same could also be said of the architecture in many American cities of the 1980s, the era this book embraces most and the heyday of postmodernism.

What is unique about Miami is the extent to which it is made up.

Los Angeles grew because of its spectacular natural setting—a crescent of beaches surrounded by a plain framed by mountains. No matter how much people despoil the land, the topography stubbornly remains, often determining what is built, where and how. Miami, on the other hand, was a mosquito-infested swamp until the 20th century, with no clear edge and no three-dimensional shape. When the swamp was cleared to establish the only completely tropical enclave in America, the edge was defined by people. Miami Beach was formed with "land" dredged from the ocean floor to create a harbor. As every map shows, the causeway to Miami Beach is surrounded by perfect little paperclip-shaped artificial islands. The whole place is invented, only sometimes based on historical models.

In fact, in the 1980s, Miami was one of the few places (LA was another) where modernism (or neomodernism) flourished, though that is not obvious from this book. Nor is the influence of



the old modern architecture on the new. One would never know from this book that one of the first modern college campuses in America was built in Miami. Only one tiny photograph of a recent homeless shelter shows, in the background, “the Bauhaus-style student dormitories, now housing the School of Architecture on the University of Miami campus,” attributing them, correctly, to Marion Manley, 1946. But the book neglects to tell the fascinating story of this pioneering woman architect who transformed abandoned concrete shells, intended in the 1920s to be a Spanish colonial campus, into an international style campus before Mies van der Rohe’s Illinois Institute of Technology was completed. Numerous restored art deco hotels in Miami Beach by Henry Hohaus, L. Murray Dixon, Anton Skislewicz, and Igor Polevitsky appear, but the authors do not discuss them, even those of the daring and gifted Polevitsky, who has inspired Spear and Fort-Brescia of Arquitectonica. The book does not even talk much about Morris Lapidus, whose brash, theatrical, and glittery Fontainebleau and Eden Roc Hotels of the 1950s put Miami Beach architecture on the map and set a standard of pop “elegance” emulated worldwide. Any serious study of Miami architecture ought to explore the relationship between this tradition—the antithesis of the puritanical international style—and the later baroque modernism of Arquitectonica, which absorbs influences from both and turns them into buildings that manage to be outrageous and tasteful at the same time.

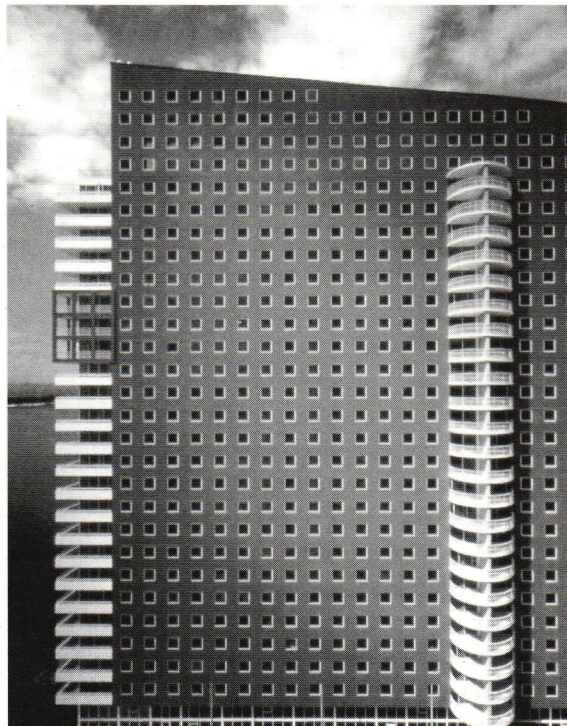
In fairness, this appealing and colorful book was not intended to be a definitive study of Miami architecture. It grew

out of an exhibition by the same name that took place last year at the Center for the Fine Arts in Miami and the Fondation pour l’Architecture in Brussels. And, like an exhibition, it provides a feeling for the place. But it is a feeling that derives from the very particular theoretical point of view of Duany and Plater-Zyberk and their mentor, Leon Krier. How ironic that their commitment to a premodern, preindustrial, preautomotive tradition should be played out in Miami, arguably the most modern city in America, the youngest “really big one,” and the one that in its multiculturalism and continental reach seems the most likely to prefigure the 21st century.

It is already clear that, whether or not NAFTA has the effects anticipated, closer ties will exist between the United States and its southern neighbors, Latino culture will have a greater impact on many American cities, new waves of non-European immigrants will make multiculturalism much more than

merely a fashion of academe, and the premodern Western tradition will not reassert itself so thoroughly that modernist and other kinds of artistic experimentation will be squelched, as they sometimes seemed to be in the 1980s. Nevertheless, the 1980s produced the careful, creative, and scholarly attempts to reinvestigate the classical tradition—perhaps the era’s most notable contributions. And nowhere were they more significant than in the work of Duany and Plater-Zyberk, because much of their work was in planning, an area where postmodernism made real progress. Moreover, DPZ produced both memorable images and adaptable principles, and much of their work (like *Arquitectonica*’s) was built. DPZ’s influential “Traditional Neighborhood Ordinance,” which is discussed but not reproduced in this book, provides what may be the best guide we have for the creation of livable communities.

*Miami: Architecture of the Tropics* is useful and problematic for the same reason—because it simultaneously deals with a seminal city and a significant architecture firm. It is a hybrid creature, part monograph, part city guide, part memoir, and as such it cannot cover either topic fully. It only shows two of the thirty town plans Duany and Plater-Zyberk have designed in different parts of the country even though the firm’s work reaches way beyond Miami’s borders. It does not illustrate all of DPZ’s Miami buildings, and fails to show the progression of the firm in planning and architecture over time. In the pictorial section, the new towns of Seaside and Windsor are shown mostly in photographs of individual buildings, rather than in aerial or panoramic views, which could show how the discrete elements work together to create visually cohesive communities. Duany and Plater-Zyberk’s custom of inviting other architects to design buildings



The Imperial Apartments, Miami, Florida; Arquitectonica International, 1979–83. (From *Miami: Architecture of the Tropics*.)

in their new towns, a practice that provides vitality and variety, is mentioned but not well illustrated. The town plans only appear in the enlightening and entertaining essay by Jean Lejeune, a Belgian architect and urban designer who has often worked with Duany and Plater-Zyberk and who teaches at the University of Miami. He places DPZ's plans and his own in the context of Miami's peculiar history, without explaining how atypical they are the city's vernacular.

Most of the dreamers Lejeune discusses who "built" Miami were not architects but amateurs, developers, or impresarios, such as George Merrick, the poet and son of a pioneer minister who created the suburb of Coral Gables in the "Spanish" style (with "Colonial, French, Moroccan, Venetian and even Chinese" districts within it); horseman James Bright who began another suburb, "Pueblo" Hialeah; and aviator Glenn Curtiss who made working-class Opa-Locka a dream of Arabian Nights come true. These men *hired* architects, whereas Duany and Plater-Zyberk are dreamers, architects, planners, and often impresarios all rolled into one, or rather two (though they do work with developers, such as the courageous Robert Davis of Seaside). And they are architects with unusual common sense, academic training, and accumulated wisdom. Because of the experience and theoretical rigor they bring to planning, it would have been interesting to see them analyze Miami as a whole, for even though it grew up in the automobile age and spreads out over a 7,500-square-mile area, unlike most young American cities, Miami has taut walking-scale sections in the middle of downtown, at the south end of Miami Beach, in lush old Coconut Grove, sunny Coral Gables, and in other planned suburbs. To what extent is DPZ's work an extension and a critique of their hometown?

DPZ's essay, "The Three Traditions of Miami," deals not with planning but

with architecture, and mainly with style, including, briefly, construction technology and environmental factors. But their piece, which first appeared in *Architectural Design* magazine in 1989, does not discuss the work of the young Miami architects whose work appears in the photographic section, "Tropical Cocktail." It correctly identifies the "three architectural traditions: the simple wooden vernacular of the first forty years, called Cracker after the pioneers; the sophisticated and abused Mediterranean Revival of the 1920s; and that peculiar brand of frivolous modernism which began in Miami Beach in the 1930s, followed in the Brasilia style of the 1950s through the hands of Morris Lapidus, and which is now spectacularly in the care of Arquitectonica." But it dismisses this entire tradition too summarily: "In the manner of *Miami Vice* on television"—the show that helped make Arquitectonica famous—"it achieves magnificent images from the moving automobile and relies on the convenient storage thereof. The public spaces, when they exist, are only the private lobbies of condominium buildings and the shopping center plazas." (This is not quite fair; Arquitectonica has done public housing.) "Yet the modernists monopolize the holy prerogatives of creativity and the spirit of the time. While one may know better, there is something solid about the tradition of Miami modernism, otherwise this architecture would not be so compelling." If instead of this mild concession to quality, the authors had struggled to specify what that "something" was, the reader might have gleaned some insight into the philosophical rivalry that helped each firm carve out its own position and caused the creative juices to flow.

As it is, the reader is apt to end up confused. Nothing really ties the various sections of the book together. The names of characters from the city's history, like Henry Flagler, who opened the city to visitors when he built the railroad all the

way to Key West twenty years before the road came, and pictures of beloved old buildings, like Schulze and Weaver's Miami Biltmore in Coral Gables of 1926, appear again and again, but no chronological survey orders the different accounts of the city's history. No detailed map connects the images that make it enticing. Few panoramas provide a broad view. And no bibliography or index guides readers or directs them to further sources. Still, a tourist could find a far less scintillating companion.

Some of the material treated in *Miami: Architecture of the Tropics* is available elsewhere. There is a beautifully and comprehensively illustrated study of Duany and Plater-Zyberk's civic-planning ideas, *Towns and Town-Making Principles* (New York: Rizzoli, 1992), a catalog of an exhibition at the Harvard Graduate School of Design, edited by Alex Krieger and William Lennertz (with essays by the editors as well as Leon Krier, Patrick Pinnell, and Vincent Scully); and the award-winning book, *Seaside: Making a Town in America* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1992), by David Mohney and Keller Easterling. No monograph of DPZ's work is yet available. Another handsome picture book, called *Miami*, was recently published by Rizzoli. With photographs by Santi Visalli, the book has a clear and concise, lively and informative introductory essay on the city's architectural history by Beth Dunlop, the respected architecture critic of the *Miami Herald*. There is also the quirky *Architectural History of Florida: Tropical Splendor* (New York: Knopf, 1987) by Hap Hatton. Organized by theme rather than chronology, and chatty in tone, it is not a scholarly book, but it has a complete biography and index, and is filled with useful information.

MIAMI: ARCHITECTURE OF THE TROPICS, Maurice Culot and Jean-François Lejeune, editors, Princeton Architectural Press, 1993, 190 pp., illus., \$39.95.

RICHARD INGERSOLL

## Of Texas and Taxes

Most critics do not look to Texas for cultural leadership. But Joel Warren Barna, author of *The See-Through Years: Creation and Destruction in Texas Architecture and Real Estate 1981–1991*, demonstrates why the architecture of Texas during the 1980s should not be overlooked as probably the most disturbing cultural milestone of the age of economic deregulation. As the state's boosters claim, everything is big in Texas, and this goes for its impact on the national debt. *The See-Through Years*, which refers to the preponderance of unrentable "see-through" office space constructed in the 1980s, pinpoints how the real estate grifters of Texas produced a landscape whose economic consequences make it truly a national patrimony.

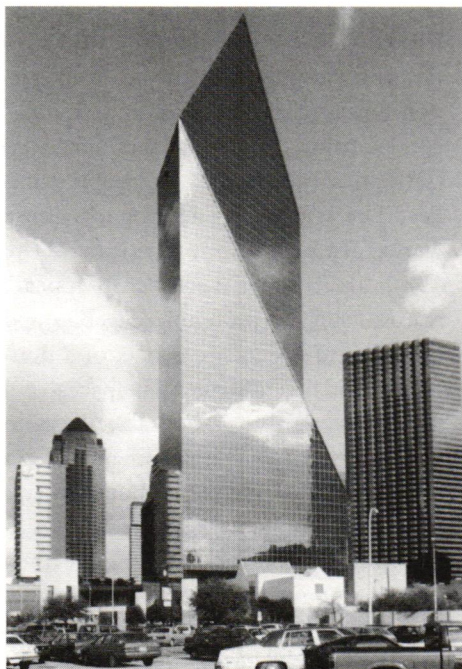
It will be interesting to observe whether historians will continue to privilege the destruction of the Berlin Wall as the major event of the 1980s, or wake up to the implications of the U.S. government's decision to allot over five-hundred billion dollars in taxpayers' money to bail out its overdrawn banking institutions. A significant portion of this drain can be traced to the inflated real estate and unprincipled lending policies practiced in Texas during the Reagan-Bush years. As Barna reports, by July 1990, the collapse of Texas real estate had forced 168 savings and loans and 334 banks to close. The S&L fiasco and its consequences are of such dangerous proportions that neither party would touch the issue during the presidential campaigns. "The Texas real estate bust," says Barna, "could help turn the U.S. into a second-rate economic power." Fortunately, Barna has

the maturity and grace to avoid too many alarming conclusions and keeps his story lodged in the facts—namely, the developer's landscape of ruthless speculation.

In the first chapter, the facts begin with two fifty-story highrises of the mid-1980s, called the Allied Bank Tower in Dallas, designed by Harry Cobb of I. M. Pei's office, and the RepublicBank Center in Houston, designed by Johnson/Burgee. Both of these well-published projects have already been through several name changes, indicating the instability of the banking institutions they represent. They are both products of leveraged overinvestment. The engagement of respectable architects resulted in epigones of high-style design—the Allied Bank, a shimmering prism, and the RepublicBank, a historicist adventure with masonry-stepped gables. In each case, the developer's strategy was to enlist design to legitimate the process by producing recognizable "cultural capital." Architecture that resulted from Texas scams became somewhat sacrifi-

cial. "The skyline monuments . . . intended by their builders and architects to represent the economic vitality of whole regions, have ended up as monuments to a colossal social tragedy, their glass or stone facades and soaring profiles seeming to deride not just the hopes of their creators but the aspirations of those who inherit the resulting mess."

Barna surmises that the success of real estate often depends on the expectations that its image can generate. "Real estate is the most transformative of commodities, with the possible exception of automobiles. . . . The really amazing thing about real estate—a quality that elevates it to a plane with the world's great religions—is that not only its successes but its failures are taken as proof of the ritual's power." Through the rituals of real estate, a heroic charisma was established for the great mercenary developers. The real "J. R." of Texas did not reside in Dallas, but was a newly arrived wildcatter in Houston. Up until the time of his arrest and suicide in 1988, J. R. McConnell was one of the



Left: Allied Bank Tower at Fountain Place, Dallas, Texas; I. M. Pei & Partners, 1986. Right: RepublicBank Center, Houston, Texas; Johnson/Burgee Architects, 1983. (From *The See-Through Years*.)



Right: A Georgian-style house that replaced a smaller bungalow in University Park. Left: A builder house, Rockwell; ca. 1989. (From *The See-Through Years*.)

great financial pyramid artists of the era of deregulation. He leveraged his pocket change into a fictional real estate empire worth over five hundred billion dollars. Among his schemes was a pharaonic resort complex on Galveston Island, designed by Michael Graves. When McConnell's bluff was finally called, he suffered a much more ghastly end than the TV character. While the speculative bubble was growing, the consequences seemed beneficial to middle-class property owners, making them oblivious to the bases of value, what Barna terms "the '80s drug of choice, OPM—other people's money."

His first chapter ends with the consideration of developers and architects as competing agents in a game to create "cultural capital." Using the careers of Ben Carpenter, the prince of Dallas' new satellite town, Las Colinas, which was replete with a pseudo-Venetian canal, and Houston's legendary crooning developer, Harold Farb, who, in his heyday, acquired a nightclub as a venue for displaying his singing talent, Barna theorizes that the developer creates an area of financial expertise that allows him privileged access to the game of development. Architects such as Philip Johnson or Michael Graves, through the media and academia, create the myth of distinction as purveyors of meaning. Developers import the architectural ringers to provide "tokens" of culture in an attempt to augment the value of a project by making it more meaningful.

Often the developer crosses into the province of the architect and likewise the architect tries to escape the logic of finance, leading to a rupture between meaning and money. In the inchoate sprawl of Texan cities and in the kitsch that passes for culture in this wasteland, only a few reminders of beauty and civic values have been produced by the alliance of meaning and money, such as Louis I. Kahn's Kimbell Museum in Fort Worth, or Renzo Piano's de Menil Collection in Houston.

The remaining twelve chapters are shorter essays on the most prominent features of this landscape of financial disaster, typologically and geographically. They include some investigation into housing types, which moved from garden apartments to "swinging singles" condos to overblown builders' mansions on tight suburban lots for yuppie families. The late-1970s developer's house was a grandiloquent version of the 1950s tract home, with "curb appeal" features such as pronounced gables and quoins, and a standard syntax of a double-height foyer, sequential spaces of a master suite, and cathedral ceilings in the family room. These dream houses look like the single-family house after a hormone treatment and were the residual effect of the real estate game then played out in the business landscape. The price tag for these houses became so inflated that architect-designed houses became competitive. Among the interesting examples illustrated in the book

are the Carraro House near San Antonio by Lake/Flato, and Gary Cunningham's Meyerson House in Dallas, both of which reuse industrial structures for spectacular domestic spaces.

In his chapters about schools, hospitals, and public housing, Barna is able to observe rays of light in terms of a darkening public realm. The more powerful chapters, however, are those devoted to the hegemonic corporate realm, with its office towers and suburban office parks. A separate chapter is devoted to the IBM office park, dubbed Solana, near Dallas, by Mitchell/Giurgola, Ricardo Legorreta, and landscape designer Peter Walker. Despite the exceptional beauty of the complex and the clever use of the automobile-based landscape, where intersections become drive-through land art, "Solana is bedeviled by the problems of typical suburban office-park development. . . . It is impossible to get from place to place within the development except by car, and there is nobody home." In the chapter devoted to the arts center in Dallas, Barna rewards the new Meyerson Symphony Center, sponsored by H. Ross Perot, with a lengthy description of its considerable merit. It is a quality project that legitimates its donor, who otherwise develops suburban office parks, and Barna concludes that "it might have been better if he had instead thought of a way to create jobs in Dallas, not just in the already affluent suburbs—although, admittedly, such activities as job creation are accorded little or no cultural value in our society."

There is much to praise in this book as an epiphany for architectural criticism. There have been a few worthy attempts to peel away the veneer of the regime of flexible accumulation, such as Mike Davis' *City of Quartz* (New York: Vintage, 1992) and Sharon Zukin's *Landscapes of Power* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), but these works become vindictive sociologies when they

confront the artifacts produced by design. *The See-Through Years* is a critical breakthrough—finally, a book that is as conversant with issues of form and style as it is with architecture's role in culture, economics, and politics. Barna tells a story that neither architects nor developers will be proud of (they will love to read about it and will hate what they read), and in this, it has its greatest potential as a contribution to redefining moral, urban, and civic values. *The See-Through Years* is the type of writing that the mainstream architectural press is not interested in publishing precisely because of the complicity that architecture plays in the process of development. The bankruptcy upon which see-through buildings have been promulgated is moral as well as financial, and Barna's book has opened a previously inoperable window.

JENNIFER TAYLOR

### Art, Architecture, and Los Angeles

*The Getty Center: Design Process* was published at the end of 1991 to coincide with the presentation of the completed design drawings for the high-profile, Southern California cultural complex. The book consists primarily of illustrations of various stages of the project, preceded by four introductory essays by individuals who participated in shaping the project, and followed by excerpts from the architectural program prepared by the directors of the various Getty Center activities. The book also provides a chronology of the project since its inception in 1983. Its main aim is to explain the procedure behind the project and the design's rationale.<sup>1</sup> From the opening essays by Harold Williams (president and CEO of the J. Paul Getty Trust), Bill Lacy (chair of the advisory architect-selection committee), and Stephen Rountree (director of operations and planning), the book conveys the design and decision-making processes as logical, thorough, and highly professional. By October 1983, the Trust had reserved an 110-acre site (part of a 742-acre hilltop in Brentwood acquired by the Center), and hired an architect, Richard Meier. Prolonged yet cooperative negotiations with authorities and communities affected by the development ensued, and the book reveals the close exchange between the client and architect in the resolution of the project.

Meier's essay, "The Design Process," continues this orderly and balanced report with a description of the building, enlivened by poetic passages that expose the central aspects of

the architectural design process. Apart from some interpretive diagrams demonstrating the relationships established with the building's orientation, the illustrations depict the building form with a valuable series of models showing the project's evolution since 1986, as well as multiple images of the site. These are accompanied by well-executed, informative drawings of the final solution. Overall, *The Getty Center: Design Process* is textually meticulous and reserved. While the presentation is extensive for a project at this early stage of development, the book is valuable as a record of an important project at its transition from idea to reality.

In both program and design, Meier's Getty Center presents an idealistic vision of the sustainable value and antidotal properties of inherited Western European art and culture. To Meier, the Getty Center provides an opportunity to introduce a representation of order, almost in a metaphysical sense, to the chaos of Los Angeles.<sup>2</sup> This in turn reflects the view of the Getty Trust as a civilizing presence of universal significance. It appears that two major strategies are employed to present these aspirations: the first lies in the classical basis of the overall plan, and the second in the repetition of the square module that brings a measured rhythm and coherence to the design. In 1984 Meier wrote to the Trust, "In my mind's eye I see a classic structure, elegant and timeless, emerging, serene and ideal, from the rough hillside, a kind of Aristotelian structure within the landscape." The image of the hilltop site overlooking the sprawling flatness of Los Angeles is charged with time-honored metaphorical allusions toward acropoli as spiritually—as well as physically—elevated precincts, but the impact is lessened here by the Center's location on the edge of the LA plain.

"The J. Paul Getty Trust was established to reflect its founder's conviction

THE SEE-THROUGH YEARS: CREATION AND DESTRUCTION IN TEXAS ARCHITECTURE AND REAL ESTATE 1981-1991, Joel Warren Barna, Rice University Press, 1992, 288 pp., illus., \$27.50.

that an understanding and appreciation of the visual arts is essential to a civilized society, “according to one essay in *Richard Meier: Building for Art* (Basel: Birkhauser Verlag, 1990). To this end, the Center “has a dual role as a private institution providing a public space for the contemplation and appreciation of art and the beauty of the natural landscape, and at the same time providing private facilities for the support of art scholarship.” Hence, the Getty Center was conceived to be somewhat like a museum, and somewhat like a sanctuary. Considering the Trust’s exclusive interest in European art, the hill site, and Meier’s predilections, it seems inevitable that Italy was the principal source of inspiration for the overall organization of the project. At first, the architect considered hill towns, envisioning the towers of San Gimignano, but local residents succeeded in setting height limits, nullifying this concept. (Nevertheless, some of his initial ideas persisted in loosening the order of the final plan.) The architect later viewed classical and Renaissance gardens around Rome as more appropriate models. The pleasant quality of the outdoor spaces of the revivalist J. Paul Getty Museum at Malibu and the suitability of its Roman villa-inspired open colonnades, walkways, and courts for the Southern Californian climate, informed the spatial relationships in the new building.

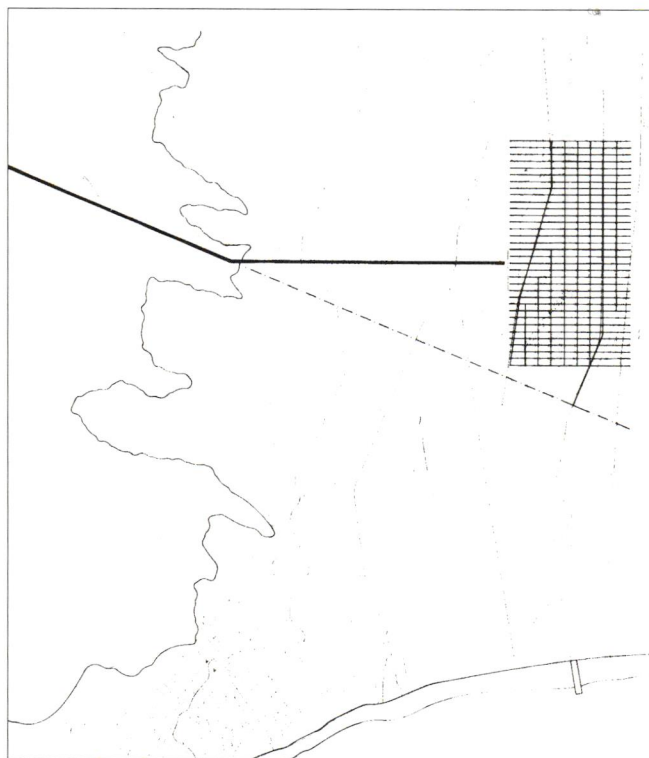
Both architect and client viewed the project as representative of a turning point in the Trust’s direction, creating a greater awareness of the Trust’s potential to thrive from

exchange between its various enterprises and to open the way to a greater liberalism. Yet there remains a lofty, quasireligious tone to most of the texts in this book, and Meier’s words reveal his accord with the primary Getty “mission.” He writes, “If the complex’s purpose is to pursue cultural ‘enlightenment,’ this metaphor can also inform the architectural conception: the building can be both literally and metaphysically ‘radiant,’ a beacon of the cultural life of Los Angeles and the art of the community at large.” Meier sees art today replacing religion as “the container and mediator to our higher selves,” with the resulting corollary that “the museum, the container of the art, becomes the modern cathedral or sacred space.”<sup>3</sup> This is no empty metaphor, as Meier writes in his essay included in the book: “The entire built project, then, will embody an essential, classic drive: the drive to find enlight-

enment and inspiration in the highest achievements of humankind.” The key to Meier’s building lies within this thinking.

As the capital of the “image production industry,” and now celebrated as much for the high art of its burgeoning museum and gallery scene as for the commercial art of its film industry and Disneyland, Los Angeles is an appropriate place for any enterprise involved in the expansion of the commodity market through the transmission of culture. Hence, the J. Paul Getty Trust, as representative of “those working in higher education, publishing, magazines, broadcast media, theater, and museums, who process and influence the reception of serious cultural products,” is ideally located.<sup>4</sup> The Getty Center buildings and the *Design Process* monograph are but a part of that production of images.

The increasing interest in representation of all forms can be ascribed to the ever-growing offerings of ephemeral services, such as art exhibitions, sporting events, movies, and concerts. This has always been LA’s business, with its expertise in imagery, simulation, and escapism in everyday and fictitious settings alike. LA, more than any other city, provides the ultimate entertainment experience. Moreover, as money has become less dependable as a measure of value and cultural objects begin to take its place, art has achieved a level of interest and status not previously enjoyed among the general population. Indeed, in this time of shifting values, the status of the art object is raised from representing not merely value, but permanence and authority. Hence, the general acceptance of the Getty Center as both icon and diversion is assured, and Meier’s design is highly conscious of the necessity to accommodate “the new phenomenon of art as a



The Getty complex was organized along two axes, generated by the Los Angeles city grid and by the north-south running San Diego Freeway which is adjacent to the site and parallel to a neighboring ravine. (From *The Getty Center: Design Process*.)

consumer object and the concomitant vast numbers of consumers."<sup>5</sup> But his question remains: how to maintain the spiritual in the context of the popular?

The J. Paul Getty Museum at Malibu, which was designed twenty years ago by R. E. Langdon and E. C. Wilson and houses a major collection of Greek and Roman antiquities, is an architectural re-creation of the Villa dei Papiri, based on its excavated ruins at Herculaneum. Although it provides a satisfactory venue for displaying the collection and serves well for instruction on Roman architecture, it is hardly adequate to reflect the Trust's profile as an arbiter of high culture. When the Trust decided to assemble its various bodies and programs into a single, new complex, it conducted a worldwide search for a creative and sympathetic architect to work with the organization in developing the brief and designing a building compatible with its view and intent. Meier was selected from a short list of three that included Fumihiko Maki and James Stirling (pared down from an original list of thirty-three who were invited to submit proposals). Meier's ability as a painter, his knowledge and understanding of art, his experience designing museums, such as the High Museum of Art in Atlanta, Georgia (1983) and the Museum for the Decorative Arts in Frankfurt (1986), and the elite nature and high quality of his architecture, made him the appropriate choice for the project. With the selection of Meier, the Trust opted for the universal values of a timeless, refined language—one of an open and interpretive abstraction. Yet the realized design is colored by allusionary elements and romantic associations uncommon for Meier.

As the architect observed, "the site, the location, and the building complex together say something about the Getty's place in the city, its place in the community, and its place as an institution on the West Coast."<sup>6</sup> While it

claims to wish to break its elitism, the J. Paul Getty Trust is a conservative client and elitism remains an inherent ingredient of its activities. A populist, even vulgar, and engaging presence in the city, such as that offered by the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris, would not have been suitable. Bill Lacy, chairman of the advisory architect selection committee, commented, "I would not be truthful if I said that this was a risk-taking client who sought to do something bold and daring and reflective of the kind of colorful society that Los Angeles represents." The committee's choice of architect reflects this, for Meier too remains "outside," believing that in Los Angeles "you don't have any prescribed regional, cultural characteristics which one is necessarily trying to embody in order to give it some kind of cultural, historical significance."<sup>7</sup> Meier perceives LA to be "an amalgam of all kinds of things. It's chaos."<sup>8</sup> In Meier's words, the Getty Center will bring "a little bit of order into that chaos and give it something that hasn't existed there up to now," and provide, according to museum director John Walsh, "an antidote to the poison of forgetfulness and materialism" of the city.<sup>9</sup> Meier's project is primarily a sanctuary. The site offers a panoramic view of the sprawling city at its feet. From there, as Meier expresses it, one can fully grasp the very nature of "Los Angeles as a city of traffic and spread."

This site/city relationship and the climate of Southern California were major factors that conditioned the design. The work of Richard Neutra and Rudolf Schindler demonstrated to Meier the possibilities of maintaining the intellectual rigor of modern architecture while accommodating the particulars of climate and lifestyle.<sup>10</sup> But the regional intent of Meier's Getty design is to remedy the missing sense of urbanity as defined in a European or even East Coast context. The Getty

Center will be different, distinct, and "special" from the metropolis of which it is a part. This is recognized by Kurt Foster, director of the History of Art and the Humanities program: "You will leave the city and emerge into a more intensely urban experience than you can get in most of LA. Making an excursion up the hill to the Getty will be different from casually dropping into the MoCA [Museum of Contemporary Art] on impulse." The Getty Center, however, seems removed, aloof, and isolated from the tempo and life of the city in program and place. In marked contrast to the ostentatious, exciting, and/or make-shift quality of other buildings in LA, such as those of Frank Gehry and Morphosis, Meier's elegant design has little involvement with the city.

The world of freeways is left behind in the 1,600-car parking lot at the base of the hill, where shuttle-trams transport visitors to the entry plaza at the pivotal point of the two arms of the Center. The major components of the complex—a highly articulated, composite organization—houses the Getty Museum, Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, Conservation Institute, Art History Information Program, and Center for Education in the Arts. The plan is eventful and its conceptual organization is intellectually satisfying. The building units are oriented along two axes: the first is aligned with the Los Angeles grid, and the second, with the north-south running San Diego Freeway, which deflects 22.5 degrees as it passes the site and runs parallel to the ridges and ravine of the adjacent hill. The basic composition of the scheme is determined by the angled interlocking of the two groups of buildings. The plan is further enriched by its order—that of broken circles which counter the orthogonal structure in both building and land form.

The relevance of the orientation of the axes of the new complex is not readily evident. Meier insists that the

complex's orientation with the city does not imply a relationship between them, and the fact that the deflected freeway actually runs north appears to be coincidental. The reliance on somewhat arbitrary, absent, or abstract markers for anchoring compositions in current architecture seems highly symptomatic of the contemporary loss of orientation and meaninglessness of cosmological readings—traditionally defined by interpreting heavenly bodies.<sup>11</sup> Today, there is little to instruct our monuments; sadly, without conviction, we grasp and relate to whatever is available to stabilize our work.<sup>12</sup> The Getty Center authentically portrays this rootlessness, and Meier's concern to tie down the complex, even arbitrarily, is comprehensible.

His previous buildings have tended to stand aloof from their sites, complementing through opposition. The Getty Center, which appears to be closely integrated with the hilltop, opens up a new dimension in his work. Of note is Meier's interest in Frank Lloyd Wright and Alvar Aalto as modern architects who embodied the spirit of the landscape in their work. At the Getty Center, Meier continues to use paneled, metallic veneers, and on the museum buildings and the podiums of other structures in the complex, he furthers the use of stone facing that is now common in his work.<sup>13</sup> The Getty Center derives considerably from Wright's LA houses (notably the Innis-Brown House, which Meier visited on more than one occasion while designing the Getty); Meier was impressed with the visual strength of their heavily textured square blocks and the ways in which Wright modeled the building masses with light, and controlled the passage in and out of the buildings. Meier writes that the materials of the Getty Center "will strike a balance between classic human concerns and the natural substances of the rugged setting," and that the stone facings offer "a connec-

tion to the landscape." The matte metal panels will dull over time, blending with and mutely reflecting the colors of the landscape. The building's finishes, however, will be precise and dressed, as Meier remains a classicist committed to preserving "the completeness of this separation that occurs along the plane of the building enclosures."<sup>14</sup>

The raised, twenty-four-acre building site allows for a particular type of connection with the city. The building spaces are introverted and the views restricted, with the scenery broken and varied; only slices of the Los Angeles area are visible as one moves through the site to the belvedere, where the jigsaw pieces are revealed together, the panorama whole. The complex aspires to fulfill a landmark role, conceived by Meier as providing a sense of identity from a distance and a sense of place on the site. But the focus of the Getty Center is merely conceptual, because it provides only one of many foci scattered through the building stratum of LA, and a marginal one at that. It is a low-profile complex, with less visibility than desired by its planners, who were faced with local height restrictions. The museum roofline was limited to sixty-five feet above the ridge, and the rest of the complex to forty-five feet. The Getty Center will still be fairly visible from most vantage points in the immediate area, but increased height through some strong, identifiable elements (such as the San Gimignano-inspired towers Meier initially proposed) would have provided a valuable orienting marker in an amorphous sweep of terrain. The Getty Center is extremely specific in a physical sense to its site, rather than to California as a region, with axes that have defined limits, indicative perhaps of its lack of assimilation of the LA scene.

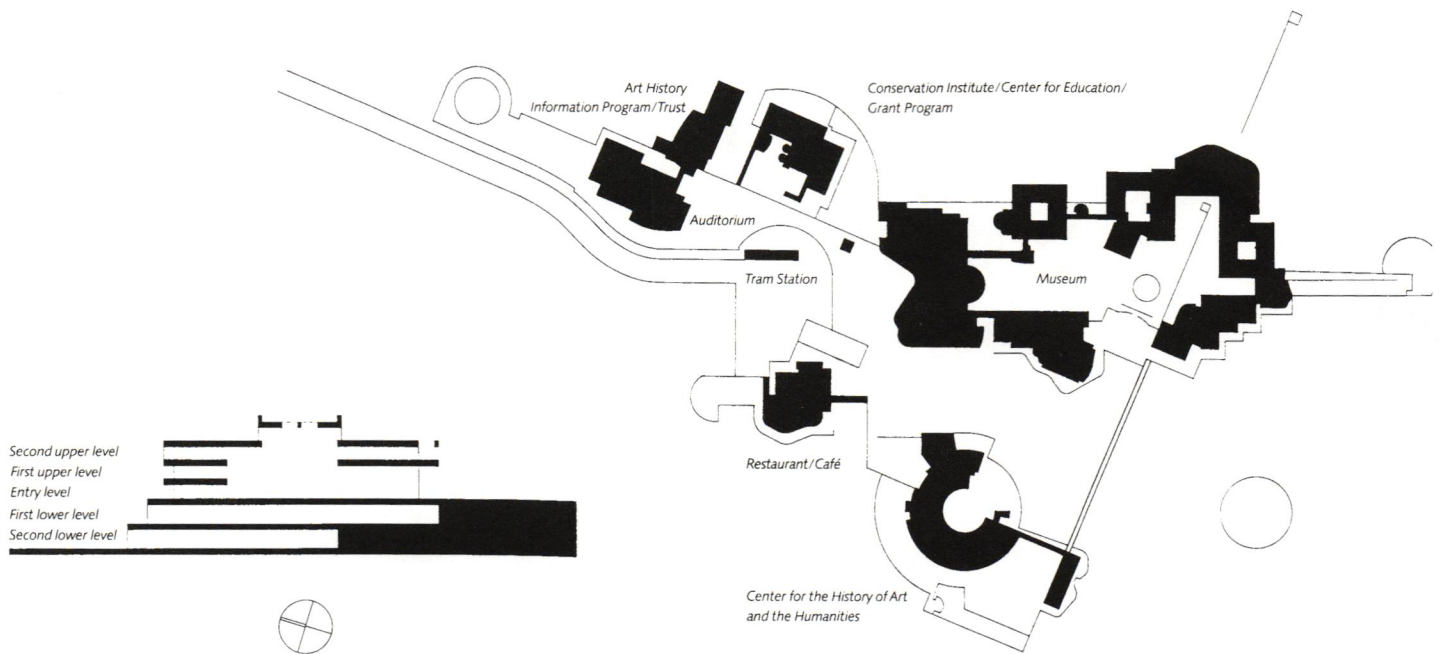
Meier has asserted the importance of the natural land form and the quality of natural light as primary generators of the Center's identity with place—an

assertion that is debatable considering the major earthworks that were undertaken to alter the site's existing conditions. Earth from the construction of the parking area and site approach was moved to fill and re-contour the deep neighboring ravine. Nonetheless, Meier's design, notably in the museum precinct, exploits the possibilities of the climate with layered, unclear boundaries derived from multiple fringing pergolas, colonnades, and terraces. Further, while the museum buildings are solidly enclosed and lit from above, the diversity of the Getty enterprise has allowed for varied experiments with lighting that exploits the brilliant California sunshine (when smog permits), described by Meier as "intoxicating."

The buildings have clear definitions of private and public use, and of their related roles as places for public enjoyment and education. The outline of the plateau for the Getty site lent itself well to zoning its functions into two wings, which are hinged at the site access point. While the public routes have a sequential logic, circulation is not strictly controlled: atypically for Meier, his design encourages deviation from the planned route, along alternate exterior paths. The route remains ordered, but allows freedom to move in and out of structured sequence. The open courtyards and dramatic stepped terraces are meant for public enjoyment. As Stephen Rountree, director of the building program, comments, the site is planned to "be an urban park or garden, one of the few in the city and certainly one of the most available and compelling." The museum and garden may be intended as Elysium fields of escape and refuge, but how available will they really be, with both logistics and repute working against their perceived accessibility?

The basic order of the Getty Center derives from Roman precedent, yet exploits the 20th-century ability "to crack open an otherwise Classically bal-





Key plan of the final design for the Getty Center complex, Malibu, California; Richard Meier, 1991. (From *The Getty Center: Design Process*.)

anced plan.”<sup>15</sup> Meier’s is a highly composite design of distinct units arranged in discrete public and private sections along the established axes, with the museum blocks turned and slicing between the other units following the displaced parallel axes. Such compositional devices are becoming increasingly characteristic of Meier’s work. His straining to break free from the orthogonal constraints imposed by the existing villa form and the general demeanor of the European city at the Frankfurt museum is followed by increased liberation at the Atlanta museum; and the bonds are more fully released at the Getty Center by the latitude afforded by its hilltop site and Los Angeles context. Yet underlying all is the controlling three-dimensional grid. The square size of the book is the square of the building grid, which is the iconic grid of the American city.

There is a strong three-dimensional reading of overlapping fragments in the Getty Center plan.<sup>16</sup> The overall composition is held together by the central

landscape axis and the primary architectural axis, which intersects the landscape axis at the major drop in the terrain; it also intersects the axis of the museum group that is orthogonal to it. The landscape axis continues over the ridge, stepping down the terraced amphitheater and terminating at the circular reflecting pool that is ringed by a classical grove of orange trees. The architectural axis, with its real and implied extensions, slashes across and beyond the bounds of the site, thus anchoring the complex into the hillside. Joseph Rykwert has questioned the use of the word “axes” for the Getty Center’s controlling lines.<sup>17</sup> The plan, however, is certainly determined by axial order, though level changes as well as obstructions in some sections, such as the museum precinct, will block such a reading. Moreover, visitors’ paths are forced to deviate, so the underlying order will not be readily apprehended. Of course, architecture cannot be made out of geometry alone, and the success of the Getty Center will be determined

by more than its three-dimensional quality. The compositional looseness that the controlling structure of the Getty Center permits brings to mind Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter’s *Collage City* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1978), notably their analysis of Hadrian’s Villa Adriana at Tivoli (which Meier refers to, along with Caprarola, as a source of inspiration for his essay in *The Getty Center*). Hadrian’s Villa is discussed in *Collage City* in the chapter “Collision City and the Politics of *Bricolage*,” and appropriately described as “the accumulation of set-pieces in collision.” The Getty Center is a collage of set-pieces but they do not collide. Meier permits intersection but not the freedom for collision.

What surfaces most clearly in Meier’s scheme is a precise balance between the conceptual origin of Western architectural traditions and a displaced 20th-century interpretation of it. The controlling idea behind the design is singular on both micro and macro scales, and, through turned volumes



Axonometric view of the Getty Center. (From *The Getty Center: Design Process*.)

and deflected paths, the order remains intact. Yet there is a multiplicity of individual spaces, forms, and expressions, via variations within the order itself as well as level changes, lighting effects, and building and planting material. Conceptually, the complex derives order from randomness and pulls fragments into an interrupted coherence.

The Getty Center as published confirms the remarkable sanity and spirituality of Meier's work, and his ability to represent high ideals—in fact, the Getty Center may well be the last architectural embodiment of order, light,

and beauty, defiantly counteracting the ever-increasing “messiness” of the world. The building will inevitably be compared to other American museums, such as Frank Lloyd Wright's Guggenheim, Louis I. Kahn's Kimbell, and to Meier's own earlier museums. In its engagement with history, site, and climate, the Getty Center extends Meier's architecture beyond his preoccupations with space, volume, surface, and light, and furthers his studies in the ordering of complex independent fragments, as evidenced in his urban projects in Europe. The minimalist austerity of his

earlier museums is softened in the case of the Getty by richer coloration and texture in materials, enlivened surfaces generated by the need for shade from the strong California sun, and the buildings' relaxed involvement with their environs.

The elevated site and the unique, exclusive nature of the design satisfactorily locate the Getty Trust in a world removed from ordinary life (much like the worlds of art and scholarship). But its monastic isolation mitigates the local population's ability to experience the place as a garden, museum, or center

for learning. Will it really serve as a park for Los Angeles? And, how convenient is it for students? What of the break in the corner coffee shop, or the dash home for a quick shower before pressing on? The design promises to compensate for these deficiencies with the pleasing, varied compositions of buildings and gardens, whose distinction will be measured by how well they sustain and reveal the tense balance of order and deviation so evident in the drawings that appear in *The Getty Center: Design Process*.

Le Corbusier was more interested in the recording of his buildings in their pure conceptual state than he was in their less-than-perfect reality. *The Getty Center: Design Process* records Meier's design in its purest form (as a concept, rendered only in drawings and words, as yet unsullied by the building process, let alone by messy occupation!), and, as such, provides a lasting testimony to the "idea." This seems particularly significant in the case of the Getty project, given that the value of the "idea" is important to both the Trust and Meier. But while the Center consciously represents a particular civilizing ideal, the design's restless order testifies that, even as an "idea," it is, nevertheless, affected by the less-than-perfect world outside its doors.

## NOTES

1. A comparison between *The Getty Center: Design Process* and Peter Eisenman's *House X* (New York: Rizzoli, 1982), another book on design process, is revealing of both Meier's and the Trust's attitudes toward the project.
2. Conversations with Richard Meier, Los Angeles, April 1991.
3. Richard Meier, "Royal Gold Medal Address, 1988, RIBA," in Lisa J. Green, ed., *Richard Meier* (London: Academy Editions, and New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990), p. 213.
4. Daniel Bell, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* (London: Heinemann, 1976), p. 20.
5. Meier, "Royal Gold Medal Address," p. 213. The number of visitors to the Center per day will be restricted to 5,000.
6. From "Meier's Museums: A Tale of Two

Cities," *The Journal of Art* (April 1989): 50.

7. Interviews with Bill Lacy and R. Meier, "The Getty Trust and the Process of Patronage," *Harvard Architecture Review* 6 (1987): 127 and 130.
8. Meier as quoted by Michael Webb, "King of the Hill," *Buzz* (February-March 1991): 89.
9. Meier as quoted in *Harvard Architecture Review*, p. 131; and Walsh as quoted in *Buzz*, p. 66.
10. "Catching up with the Getty Center," *Los Angeles Times*, October 22, 1990, p. F12.
11. Monte Alban of the Central American Zapotecs exemplifies a hilltop citadel axially aligned by cosmological determinants.
12. The alignment of one axis of Peter Eisenman's Wexner Center with the airport indicates the desperation of the situation.
13. Such facings appeared in the podium of the Atheneum and on major elements in Meier's Bridgeport Center. Earthy cladding materials are found in his early work, such as the brick tile in the Twin Parks Complex, Bronx, New York, of 1974.
14. R. Meier, "Essay," *Perspecta* 24 (1987): 104-5.
15. "Royal Gold Medal Address," p. 214.
16. The significance of Colin Rowe and Robert Slutzky's essay, "Transparency: Literal and Phenomenal," about Meier's and other related work is well-recognized and pertinent to this discussion. From *Mathematics of the Ideal Villa and Other Essays* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1976), pp. 159-83.
17. Joseph Rykwert, "The Second Installment," *Richard Meier Architect 1985-1991* (New York: Rizzoli, 1991), p. 24.

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THE GETTY CENTER: DESIGN PROCESS, Harold Williams, et al., Getty Trust Publications, 1991, 172 pp., illus., \$40.00.

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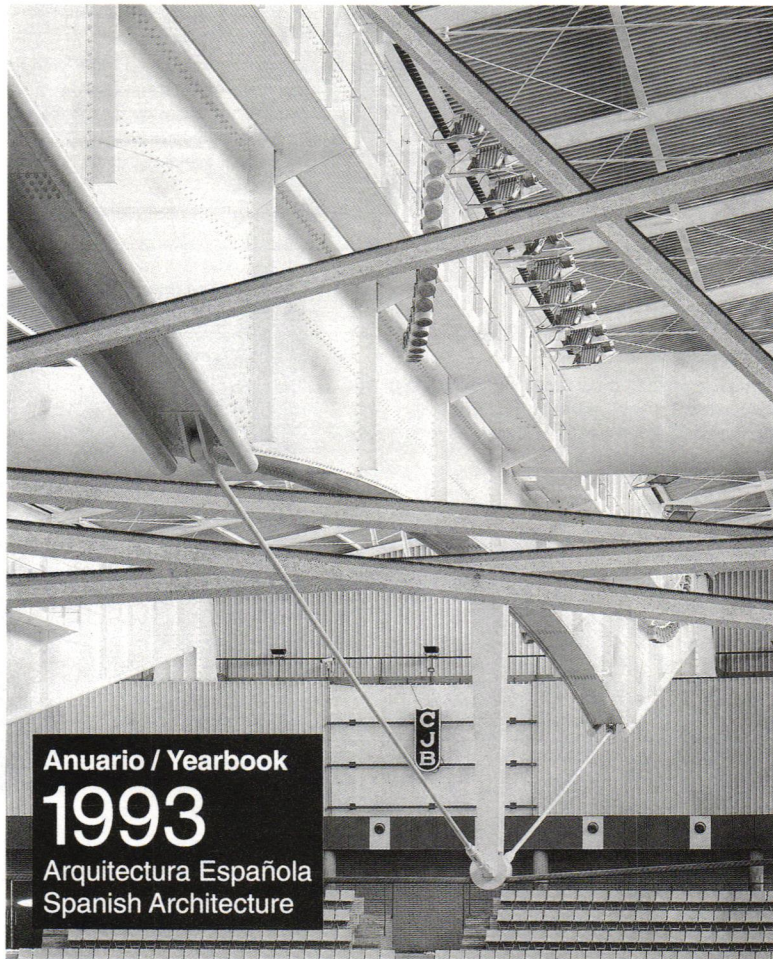
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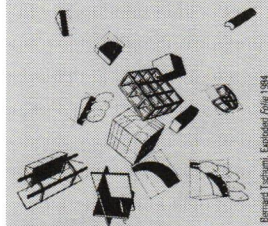
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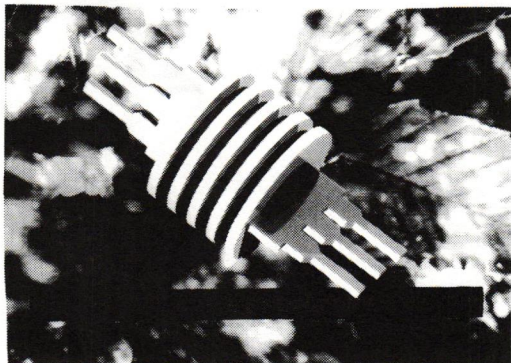
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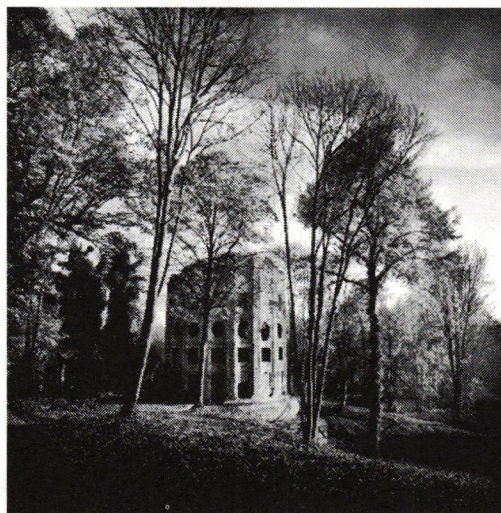
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Museum of Modern Art, Suzanne Bloem, *White Plug*, 1987



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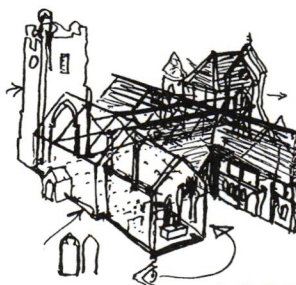
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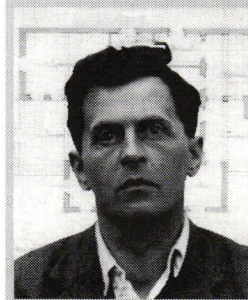
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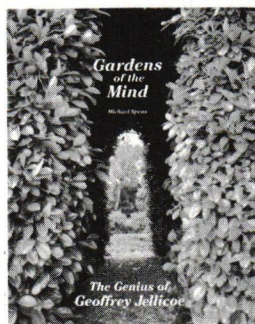
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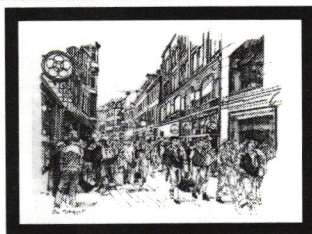
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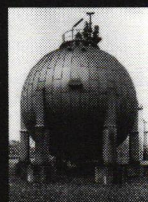


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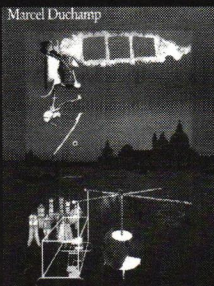
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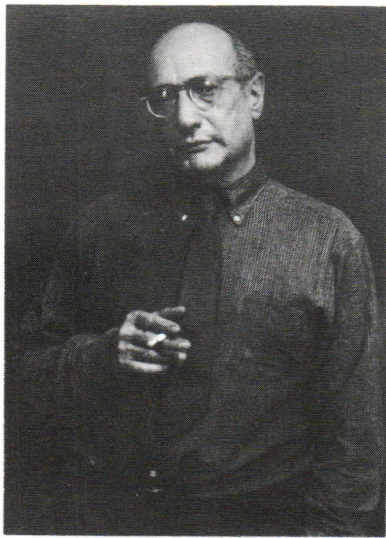
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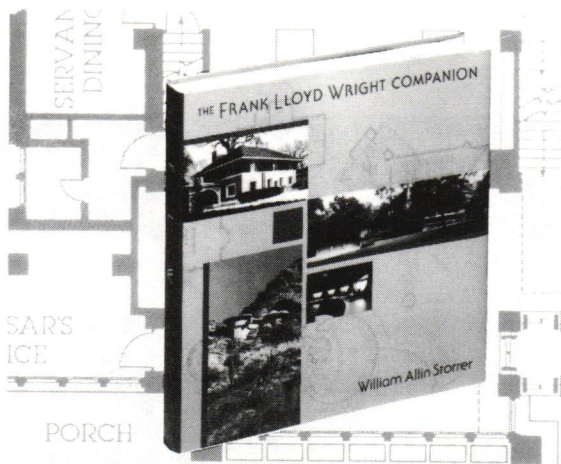
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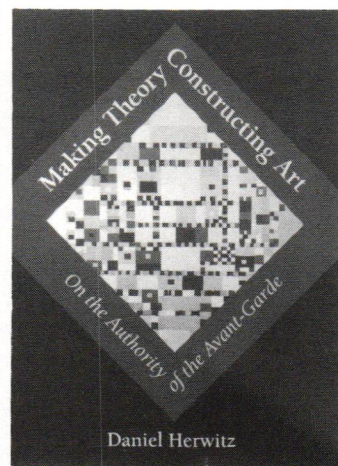
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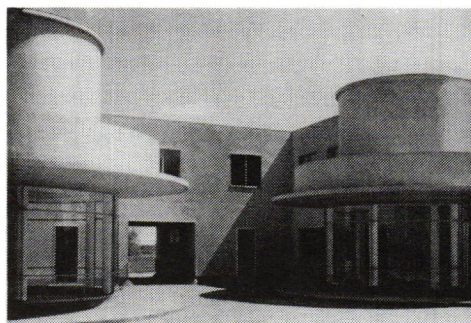
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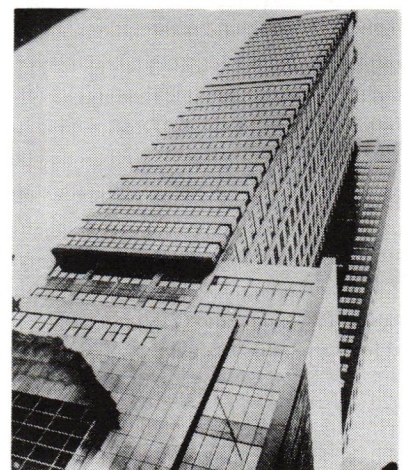
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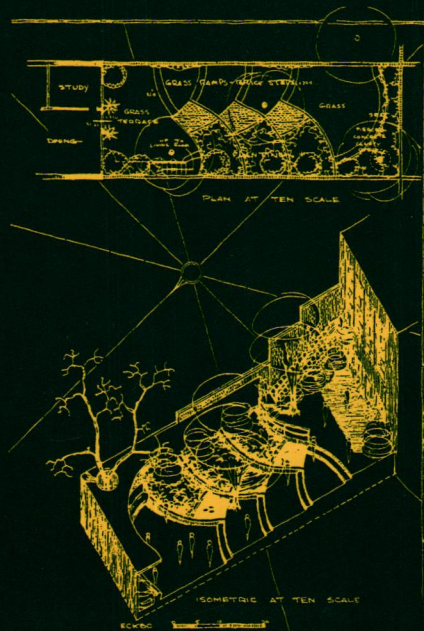
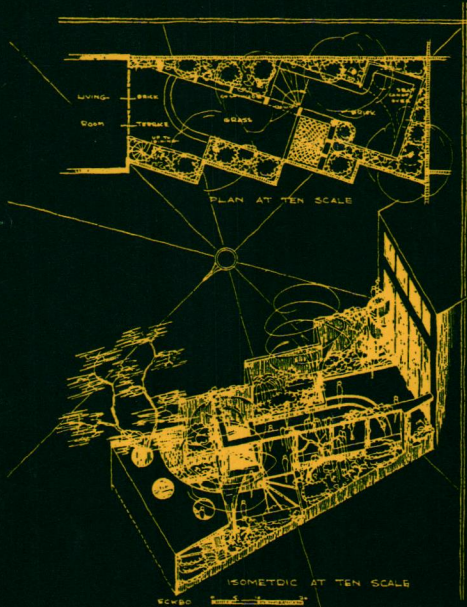
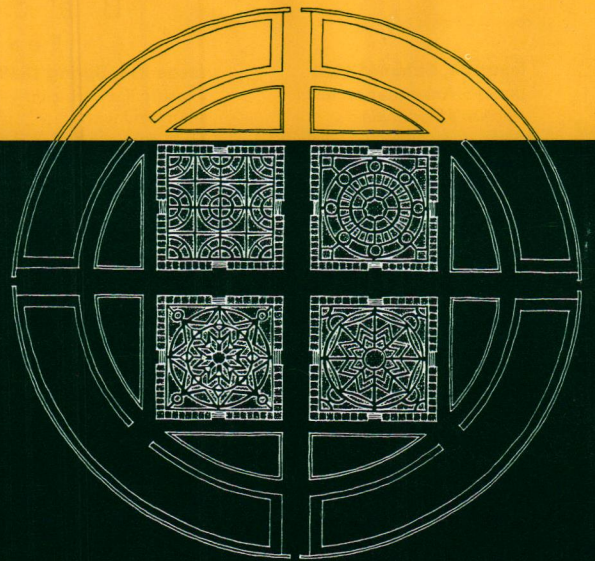
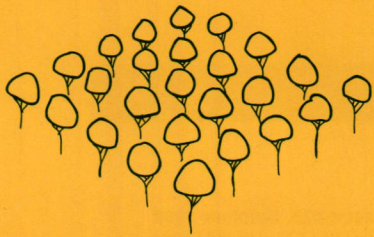
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