

Places

\$6.00

A Quarterly Journal
of Environmental Design

Transforming the American Garden

12 New Landscape Designs: An Exhibition

Jory Johnson
Terence Harkness
Martha Schwartz
Michael R. Van Valkenburgh
Julie Moir Messervy
Peter Friedrich Droege
Lee Weintraub
John di Domenico
Warren T. Byrd, Jr.
Chip Sullivan
Teresita Falcón
Juan Antonio Bueno
Steven R. Krog
B. Stauffacher Solomon
Pamela Burton
Katherine Spitz
Vincent Healy

American Edens

Charles Moore and William
Mitchell

The National Country Garden

China's Street Trees

John W. Hill and Catherine
Mahan

An Exhibition Debate

with contributions from
Susan Frey
Leo Marx
Robert B. Riley
Betsy Cann
Catherine Howett
Randolph T. Hester, Jr.
Laurie Olin
Marc Treib

Published by The MIT Press
for the College of
Environmental Design,
University of California,
Berkeley
and the

School of Architecture
and Planning,
Massachusetts Institute
of Technology

ISSN 0731-0455

Volume 3, Number 3

Places

A Quarterly Journal
of Environmental Design

Editor
Donlyn Lyndon

Consulting Editor
William L. Porter

Founding Editor
Donald Appleyard

Sponsors
Richard Bender
John de Monchaux

Assistant Editor
Alice Wingwall

Editorial Assistants
Kyle Thayer
Charlotte Sproul

Design
Marc Treib

Production Editor
Jean LeGwin

Contributing Board
Stanford Anderson
Clare Cooper Marcus
Lois Craig
John Habraken
Gary Hack
Randolph Hester
Allan Jacobs
Spiro Kostof
Ray Lifchez
Roger Montgomery
John R. Myer
Lisa Peattie
Marc Treib

Transforming the American Garden
12 New Landscape Designs

Exhibition Program
Statement 3

Preface 4
Jory Johnson

The Exhibitors
Terence Harkness 6
Julie Moir Messervy
Peter Friedrich Droegge 10
Lee Weintraub
John Di Domenico 12
Teresita Falcòn
Juan Antonio Bueno 14
Martha Schwartz 16
Michael R. Van
Valkenburgh 18
Warren T. Byrd, Jr. 22
B. Stauffacher Solomon 26
Pamela Burton
Katherine Spitz 30
Chip Sullivan 32
Steven R. Krog 36
Vincent Healy 40

An Exhibition Debate

A Letter 42
Susan Frey

The Garden and
Pastoralism 43
Leo Marx

On the Perils of Meaning 45
Robert B. Riley

Led Down the Garden Path 46
Betsy Cann

The Garden as Art 48
Catherine Howett

Skill, Love, Struggle, and
Good Dirt 50
Randolph T. Hester, Jr.

12 Brillig and Contrary
Gardens 52
Laurie Olin

On Paper and Plants 56
Marc Treib

American Edens 60
Charles Moore and William
Mitchell

National Country Garden 65

China's Street Trees 70
John W. Hill and Catherine
Mahan

There is no line where the landscape stops and the architecture begins. People move through wall of green and glass as easily as they see the two with the same glance.

I have made much of green rectangles in my drawings and landscapes. They are paragon, paradigm, panacea and paradise. Materials change. Scale changes. Here the rectangles are lavender. Order is in the furrows of the fields as it is in the plans of the houses. Order is orientation and cultivation; enclosure makes a landscape into a paradise; magic is where illusion is reality and opposites merge. A greenhouse is a garden. A cypress wall is architecture. A roofless room is a garden. Within a wisteria arcade there is architecture.

This project has two sites. If the drawing, which happens to denote ideas about landscapes and buildings, is an end in itself, the site is the five 12-by-9-inch pieces of paper. If the drawing, denoting a garden with three buildings, is intended to be built, the site is a piece of land bordering a slough of the Petaluma River where it divides Marin from Sonoma County as it enters San Francisco Bay.

Drawing No. 1

The south elevation (1 inch = 100 feet) of three structures: two boathouses and a greenhouse/dwelling fronted by two flower fields of Spanish lavender (*Lavandula stoechas*). A lap pool segments the fields. Meadows, reseeded and luxuriant with California poppies (*Eschscholzia californica*), extend to the boathouses and connect the man-made garden with the meadows and hills beyond. A triple arbor of wisteria (*W. sinensis*) encloses the site to the west; a wall of Monterey cypress (*Cupressus macrocarpa*) with seven doorways screens the project from the road. Four tall palms (*Washingtonia*) announce the entrances. The eastern view opens to natural grasslands and marshes. Vines (*Rosmarinus officinalis* "Prostratus," *Lantana montevidensis*, *Coprosma kirkii*, and *Cenothus gloriosus*) drip from urns, roof-decks and greenwalls. The northern elevations abut the slough.

Drawing No. 2

The west houseboat and portico of the greenhouse/dwelling (1/8 inch = 1 foot).

Drawing No. 3

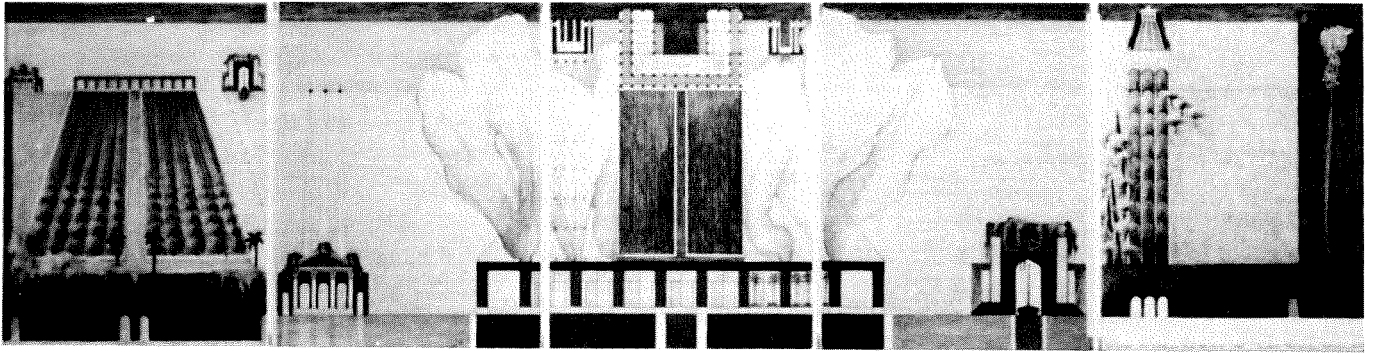
Partial plan of the complex (1 inch = 100 feet). Elevation (1/8 inch = 1 foot).

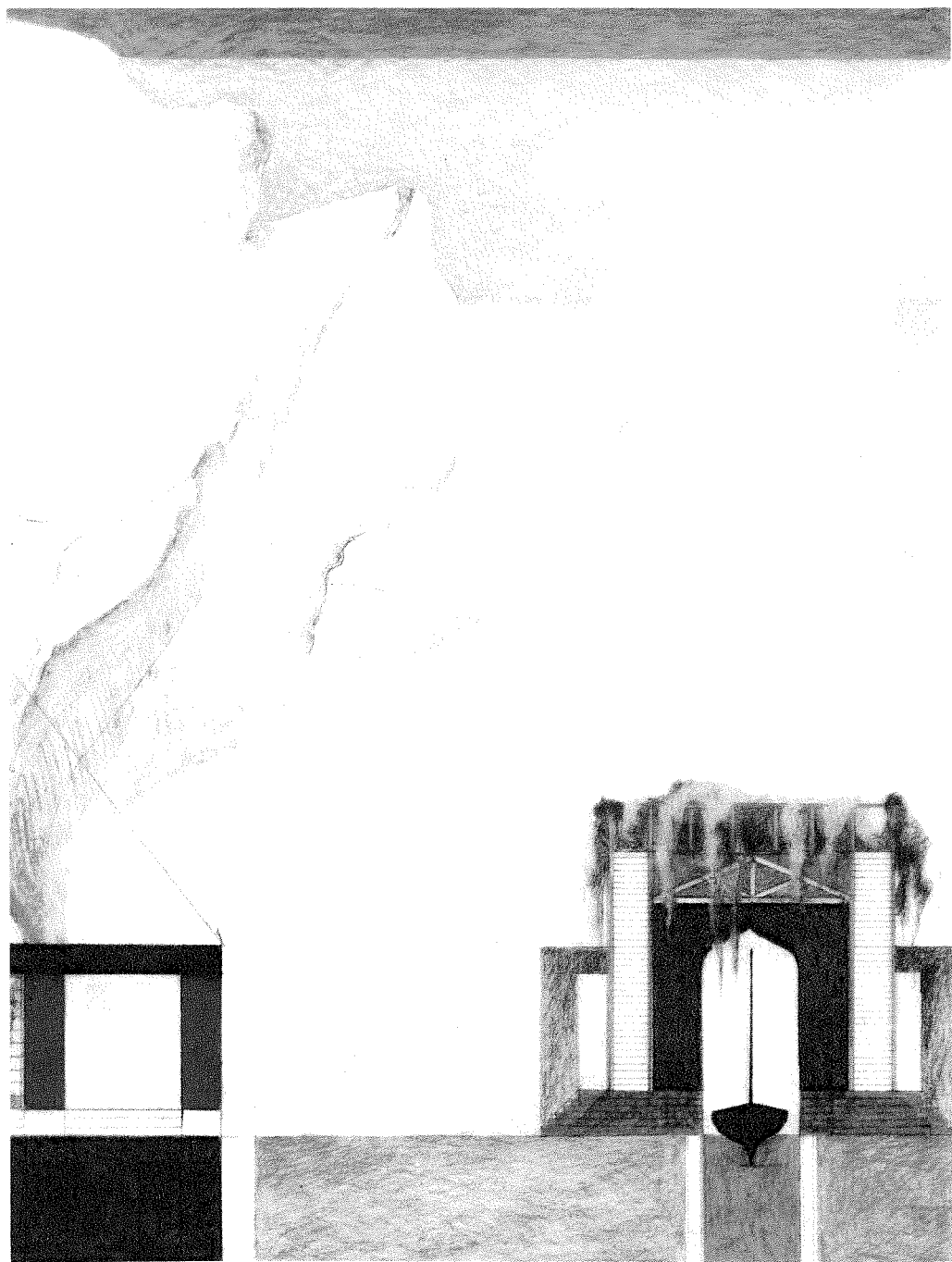
Drawing No. 4

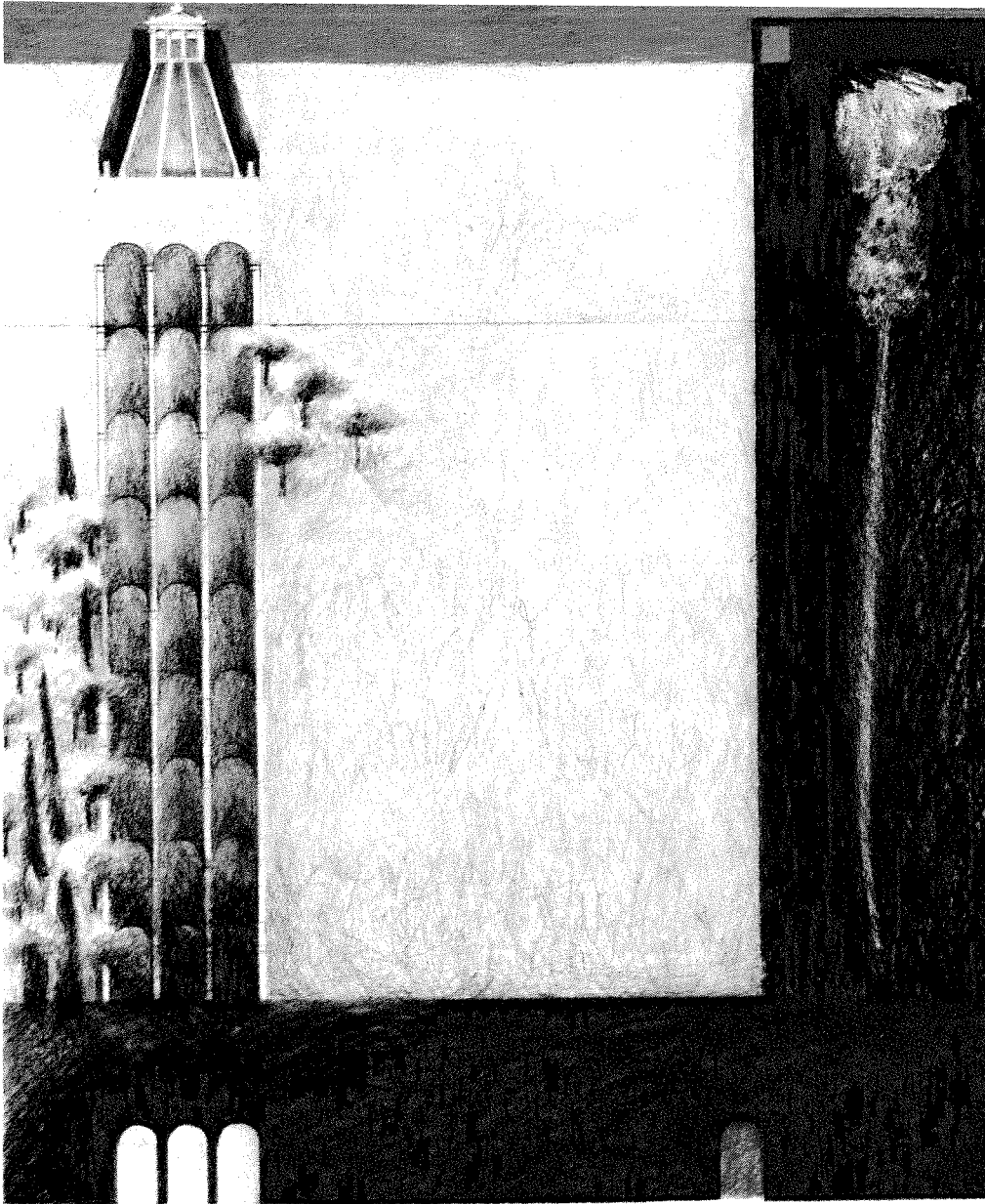
The east boathouse and the portico of the greenhouse/dwelling (1/8 inch = 1 foot).

Drawing No. 5

The poppy meadow enclosed by the triple arbor partially emerges in a boscage of blue Italian cypress (*C. s. "Glaucia"*), olives (*Olea europaea*), and eucalyptus (*E. polyanthemus*), the cypress wall and the lavender field.







Set - 212 Two Fields and Three Structures 1985 Barbara Thompson, Sculpture, 9

As a common theme for the exhibition, we were asked to address the flower. Its presence in the garden affects us in both a sensual and a symbolic manner. We sense its color, texture and scent. But we also recognize its metaphorical message of life, mortality and rebirth. Its radiant present remembers the past and foretells the future. Its language is that of the landscape. Its *color* is that of life.

The Landscape/These Gardens

These gardens emphasize the sensual presence and symbolic meaning of the landscape. The colors of the tropics, the rising of the sun, the cycling of the tides, the falling of night, the changes of the weather — all are celebrated. The gardens also mark the transitions from house to landscape, and from land to water and wind.

On the water there is a parterre of sun-blooming flowers wedged in a V-shaped ensemble that aligns with the summer and winter solstices on the horizon. The receding tide reveals a nautical pattern in the lagoon and around the flower parterre. A sculpture of light-columns beams

during the night, fog and frequent rain of South Florida.

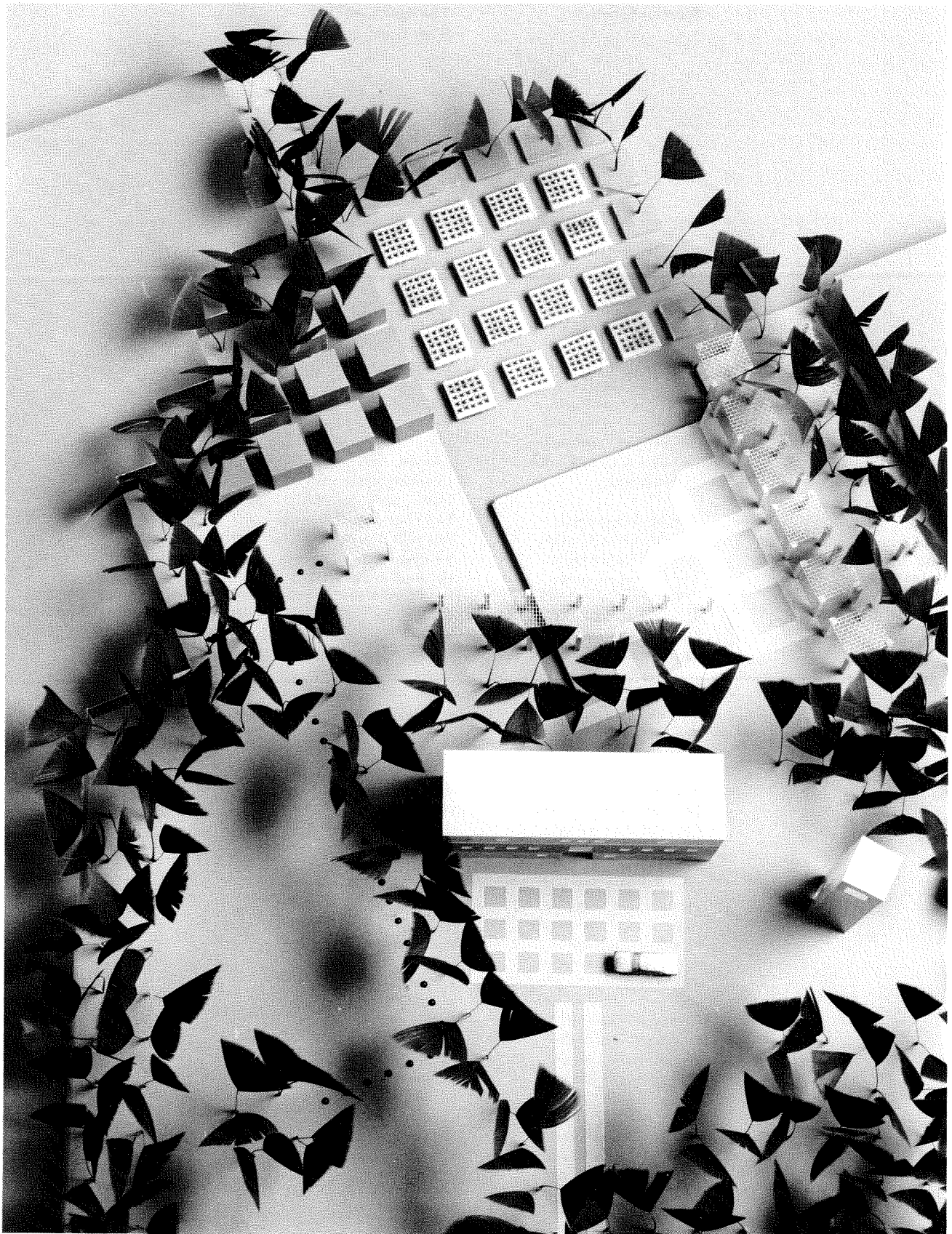
The seaside site has three entrances facing west. One entry leads to the house with its patio of palms and pergola. The other two offer waterfront and tower access to friends and neighbors through pergolas and palm allées that mark the limits of the site.

The water-edge ensemble includes a grass parterre and a clipped bosque as counterpoints to the parterre on water. There is also a swimming pool bound by lawns and pergolas.

Next to the lagoon are two lawns. One is punctuated by a palm court. The other contains four palms connected by light-columns to their equivalent of a pergola by the pool.

Our Work

The emphasis of our work is the expression of the garden as shelter affording both freedom and protection; as transition connecting the house to the landscape; as synthesis responding to the indigenous landscape, contextual form and cultural traditions; and as manifestation of memory and imagination.



Every age has its gods and heroes, icons that demarcate and exemplify the limits of our culture. The ancients worshipped the gods of Olympus, built temples to them and engaged in rites celebrating their power. Modern man worships the gods of our time: athletes. We build arenas—"gardens"—where these people demonstrate their otherworldly athletic talents for the delight and entertainment of the masses.

The crowds faithfully come to see these contemporary gods. They are worshipful and watchful, and carry placards and banners showing their devotion to one man in particular—Magic. Magic, a basketball player, is a god of the court, a wizard of whooshes, a man who—with superhuman grace—always turns in a remarkable athletic performance. Magic is a high priest of a popular culture, a mythological figure worshipped by an adoring public, the earthly epitome of all things Magic.

The worshippers celebrate his power and majesty ritualistically at each contest, sipping the golden nectar of Schlitz and Schaefer and working themselves into a Dionysian frenzy. They chant and scream

until they drop exhausted into their seats, and occasionally they fall to the floor in a stupor, unconscious.

After this unearthly scene, Magic retreats to his mountaintop to another garden—an earthly garden of unearthly pleasures harboring the restorative powers that only green grass, trees and water can provide. This garden—for a child of the city—is about an hour and a half by Porsche from the glimmering, shimmering metropolis. Here Magic is restored and revived. Here he practices his otherworldly talents, unwinding away from the hurly-burly of his public life. He allows the restorative powers of the special garden to wash over him while he wiles away the hours in his Jacuzzi, shoots hoops on the mountaintop and finds release in the lush countryside around him.

The Site: A series of ascending pastures in the horse breeding country of Columbia County in New York State, flanked on both sides by a mature hardwood forest of oaks (signifying strength) and sugar maples (for color and sweetness). The topography is characterized by a 10 percent change in grade, with a

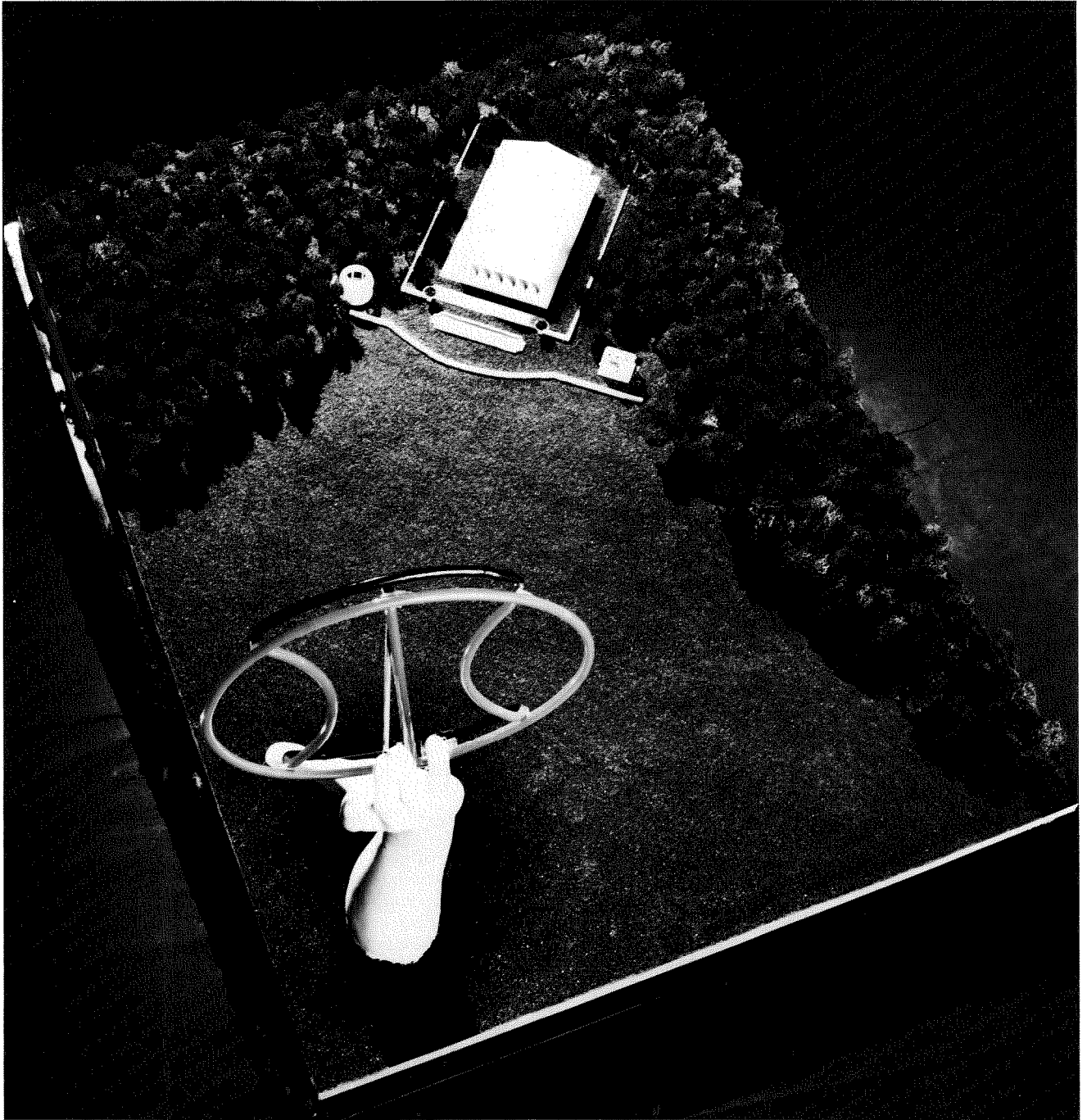
100 foot change in elevation sloping upward to a mountaintop. This peak commands views to the south and east and on a clear day, the spires of the great metropolis, home of the other Gardens where Magic reigns—Madison Square and Boston—are visible 150 miles away.

This is a landscape of contrasts. A path leads from one pasture through another, reaching a gate where one enters the final pasture in the sequence. The temple complex comes into view about 1,000 feet away, perched above on the mountainside and framed by the forest. Inside the gate the path changes direction, veering into the woodland and out of sight of the temples. Then only the paths and the dappled darkness of the forest are visible, pierced by bursts of sunlight. At the forest edge, the temples come into view again, glistening white and serene against the green of the meadow.

The sojourner enters the sacred precinct of leisure, where a reception area with a hot tub and swimming pool culminates at a statue of Nike, the God of Sneakers. The garden landscape is ordered by architectonic features—pavilions, canopies,

trellises—to form a unified composition. Priestlike, Magic routinely ascends the hill to the main area of worship, the basketball court, surrounded by an open temple structure. The pediments anchor backboards on the north and south ends.

In this temple, high above the treetops and overlooking the pristine green pastures, the earthbound Magic vaults into the air—majestic and masterful—intoxicated by the beauty of this very special garden. Here, the master athlete and the garden where he plays mesh and become one and the same—Magic—a culmination of man's striving for human athletic perfection, matched in the lushness and perfection of this garden suitable for a god.



One's vision of the world is a part of the feeling behind—and the subject of—much of one's work. This garden expresses my deep affection for the Illinois landscape. As expressed in this garden, the vision originates in the rural Middle West. The garden reflects my preoccupation with the visual qualities of these places, and my attempt to confirm and reveal them to others. Its creation has required a conscious acknowledgement of the importance and power of both past and current experience.

Living in the Middle West and experiencing its particular light, the expanse of sky and horizon, and the effect of sunset on the flat plane of farm lands—these have been particularly powerful components of my visual sense. During the summer, impressions of changing field patterns have provided experience in spaciousness, incised pattern and exploration. Such experiences have enhanced my visual sense of the power and friendliness of this distinctive landscape.

The goal of the East Central Illinois garden is to recreate the extreme flatness of the landscape—the strong horizon, the essentially open and treeless terrain, the tension

between the crispness of edge and the warping of the land plane. The sky acts as an important backdrop for changing light and objects seen against it. This setting and the garden in which it is replicated display dramatic seasonal change at planting, harvest and in the starkness of winter. This is the eye-level carving of grain fields by machine; the asymmetrical slicing of edge, field and distance by huge tractors, plows and combines; field lines changing and disappearing on the horizon in late October light; the visual tension between the empty, harvested field of soybeans and the unpicked field of corn. The patterns are seldom symmetrical, but all are contained in the Jeffersonian square-mile grid.

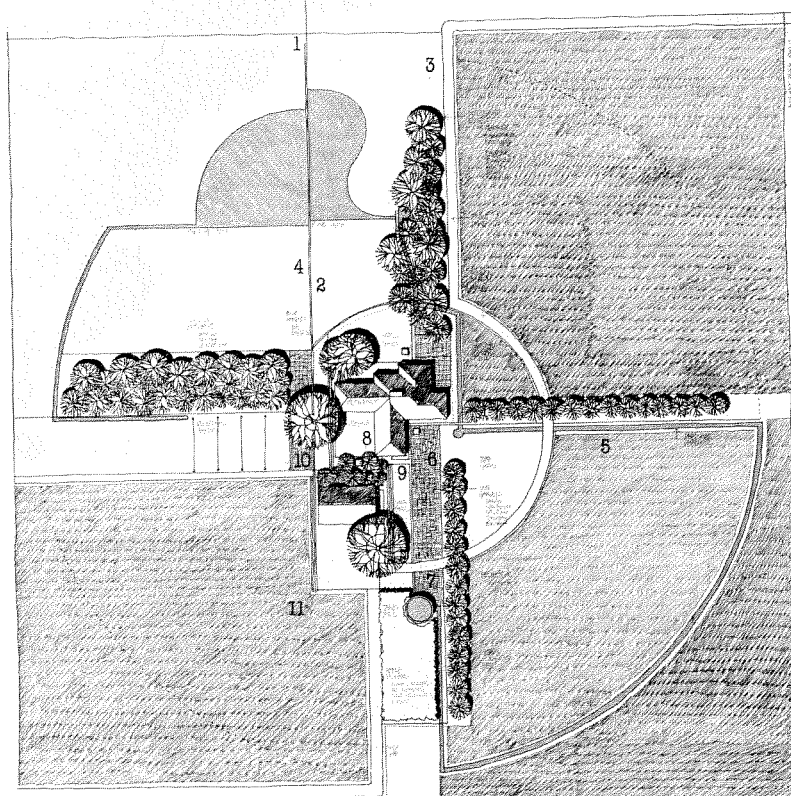
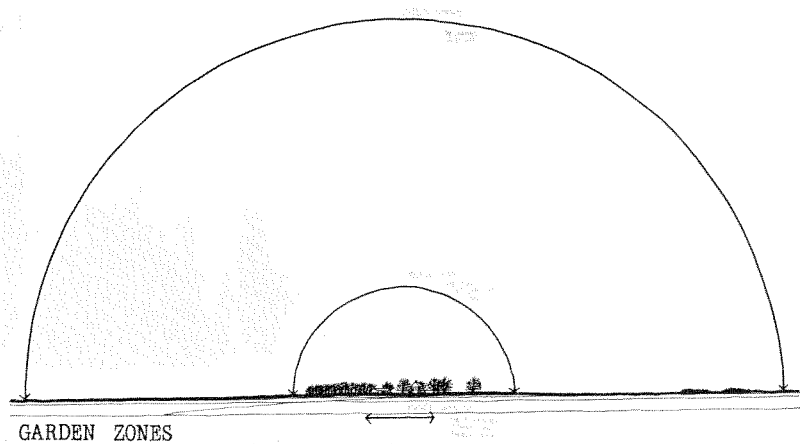
Across this regular/irregular pattern, the eye continually tracks along the field, road and ditch. The eye either follows the field line to the horizon, or it jumps from field line to field line to the horizon. Although the eye seeks built structures for scale, orientation and distance, the cumulative visual sense is of the entire scene's profound openness. This visual experience requires movement or shifting of viewpoint and direction to reveal the changing variety of pattern.

There are other important qualities present in the landscape of East Central Illinois: The richness and detail of winter trees, for example, seen against the sky. Ground fog of late fall shrouds the intermittent lines of hedge-rows. The aspect of age and its effects are revealed in trees and structures: the visual quality of growth originally controlled and confined, but now aging or escaping.

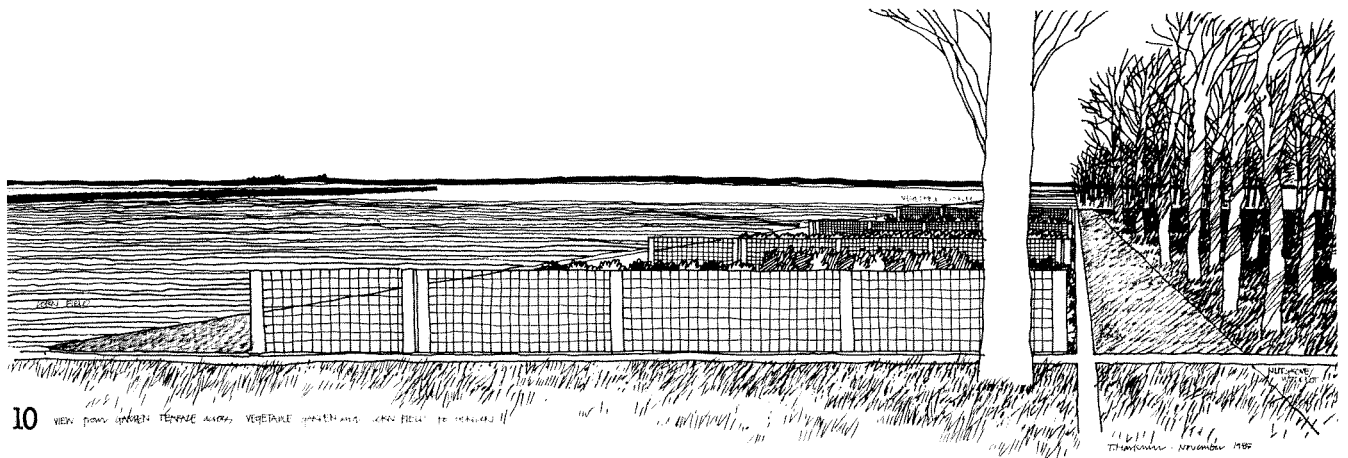
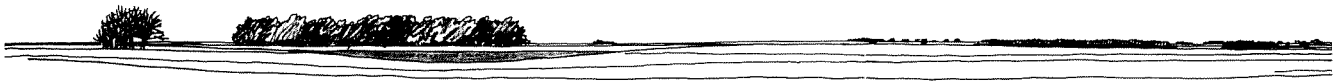
Another profound quality of the region is the directness and economy of its people, and its distinctive places and their materials. There is a congruence between the landscape and the independent, practical farmers who live there. The unadorned quality of plain concrete, metal grain bins and white clapboard siding bespeak an austerity and functional practicality that is visually direct and uncompromising—utilitarian in its economy, austere in its directness.

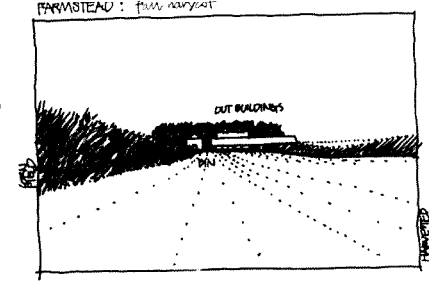
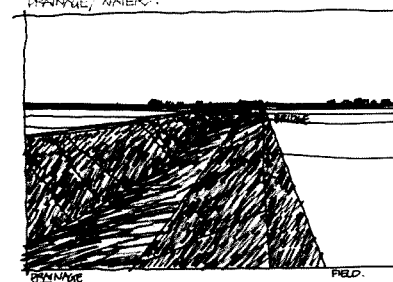
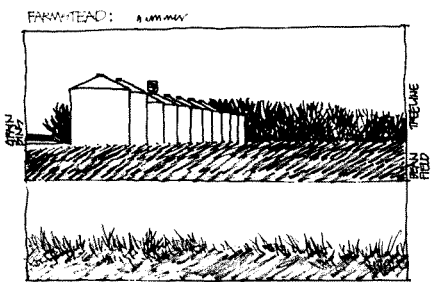
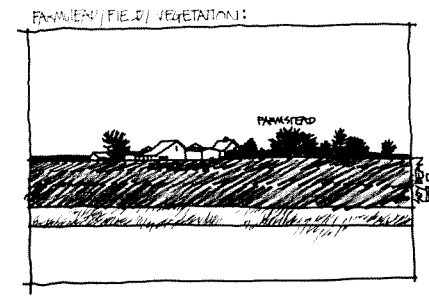
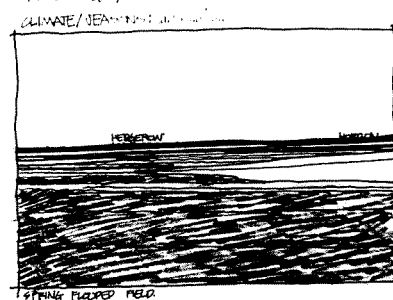
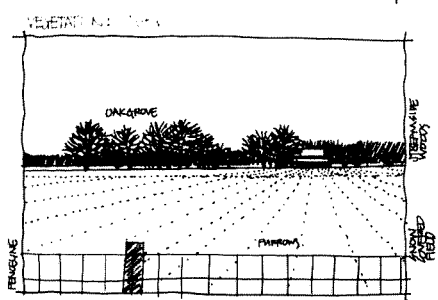
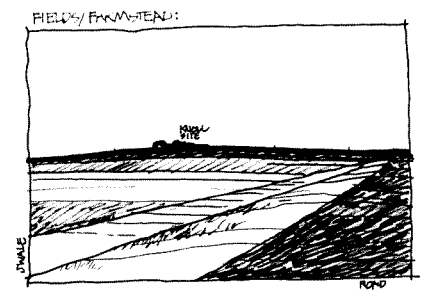
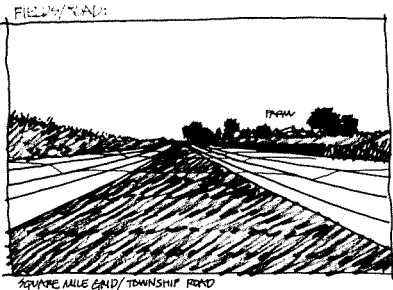
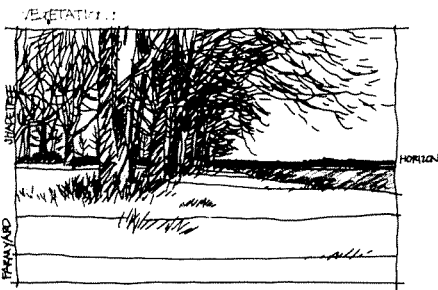
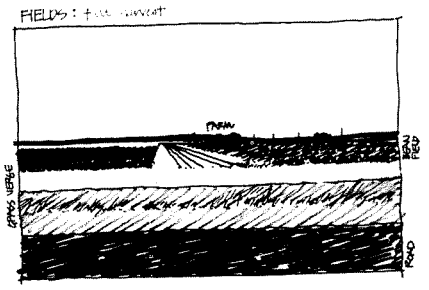
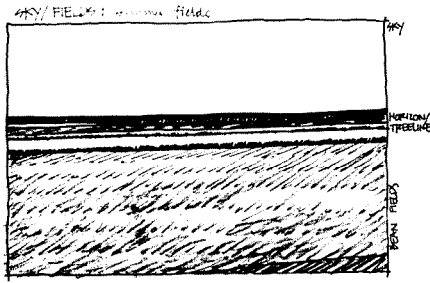
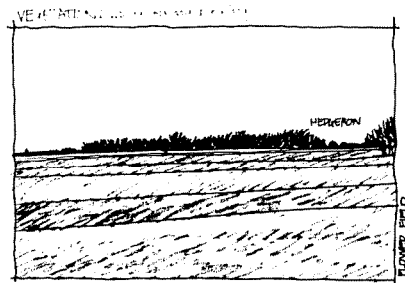
This garden's purpose is to reflect these characteristics as a visible, built expression, to be experienced through time, seasons and changing light. A change of climate such as the dusting and drifting of dry snow should reveal the region's winds and the variability of the continental climate. The tem-

porary flooding of the front lawn during and after a summer storm should invite barefoot wading. The garden focuses on and celebrates the landscape; it should demonstrate the power and qualities of this unique place. The design sources for this garden are in the landscape itself. The garden and the landscape are inseparable.



an EAST CENTRAL ILLINOIS GARDEN





Eudoxia is guided by my conviction that landscape design is both personally expressive and socially motivated. I believe that any design idea requires an interpretation of its formal precedents and natural processes, whether or not these are explicit in the final design. Inspiration for imagery arises from these and other, unsuspected sources—dreams, fleeting thoughts, memories.

Architecture and landscape architecture share the task of making functional and memorable places. Yet landscapes are open to the sky. Without a differentiation between inside and out, a landscape must be judged in spatial and sculptural terms. Indeed, this paradox is ubiquitous to the field and is a central concern explored in this project.

The name Eudoxia is taken from Italo Calvino's *Invisible Cities*, which, in its vision of the city, prompted this proposal. I was particularly taken with the following passage:

"An oracle was questioned about the mysterious bond between two objects so dissimilar as the carpet and the city. One of the two objects—

the oracle replied—has the form the gods gave the starry sky and the orbits in which the worlds revolve; the other is an approximate reflection, like every human creation."

The garden proposed here is a rich, woven, dense landscape like Calvino's imaginary carpet that captures a city's essence. Calibrated in its forms, exacting in its intent, Eudoxia is not a scenic landscape but a scenography for contemporary life.

This garden is intended for an urban, corporate headquarters and is located between a pair of new, three-story buildings. The garden cuts through an entire city block with street frontage at the north and south ends. It provides ceremonial entrances and places for meeting and contemplation, and is open to the public.

Eudoxia's composition is in the spirit of early 20th century modernists: abstracted geometric forms and spaces are linked by a broken axis and are balanced by proportion rather than symmetry. Influences include Cubism and the paintings of Moholy-Nagy. The hedge composition departs from the machine aesthetic of the modernists in the

organicism of its materials and reliance on the seasonally changing color matrix of a palette of deciduous plants. Hedges derive from the typology of planted forms by Lutyens and Jekyll and from Vita Sackville-West's Sissinghurst. Embodying a new landscape type, Eudoxia uses elements of private gardens while relating to the city in scale and complexity.

The garden joins an urban exterior to an intimate interior. Beginning at the south end, an arc of trees bows over the sidewalk edge to establish a landscape stylobate inviting entry. A twelve-foot stucco screen wall, set back from the sidewalk, is reiterated in a parallel evergreen hedge. Windows in the wall and hedge frame the landscape composition within and two doorways frame the major entry points.

The building entrances are located at the street ends under continuous, double-story loggias that extend the length of the buildings at the east and west sides, establishing covered passageways from the buildings and the garden. A labyrinth of corridors formed by hedges offers a series of pathways between the two buildings. Users of the gar-

den may revise their daily walks to include different plant fragrances, colors and densities. Each hedge is composed of one plant species. Some are evergreen, others deciduous; some have unpruned tops, others have a finished surface. A sixteen-foot-high, circular purple beech hedge is lodged asymmetrically within the composition and is incised by lowering the ground level five steps. From the ground, it is seen as a vanishing ellipse. Viewed from above, the hedge composition functions as a large parterre. Along each loggia, hedge niches provide sites for sculpture and offer places for conversation or rest.

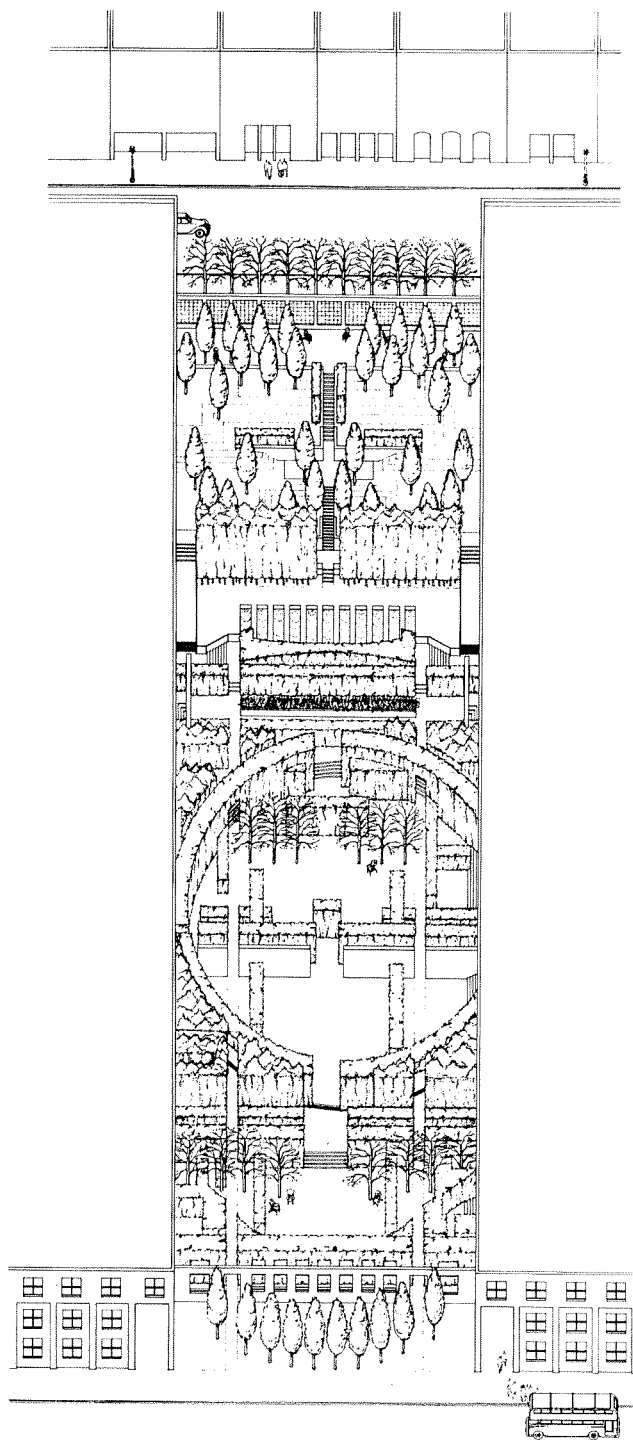
Near the center of the garden, isolated in a narrow room, is a long, raised herbaceous border of blue-flowered Siberian Iris. The image is inspired by Rothko's paintings, but here the tonality responds to seasonal light rather than the edge of the canvas. In November the withered brown foliage tacitly anticipates the stark beauty of winter.

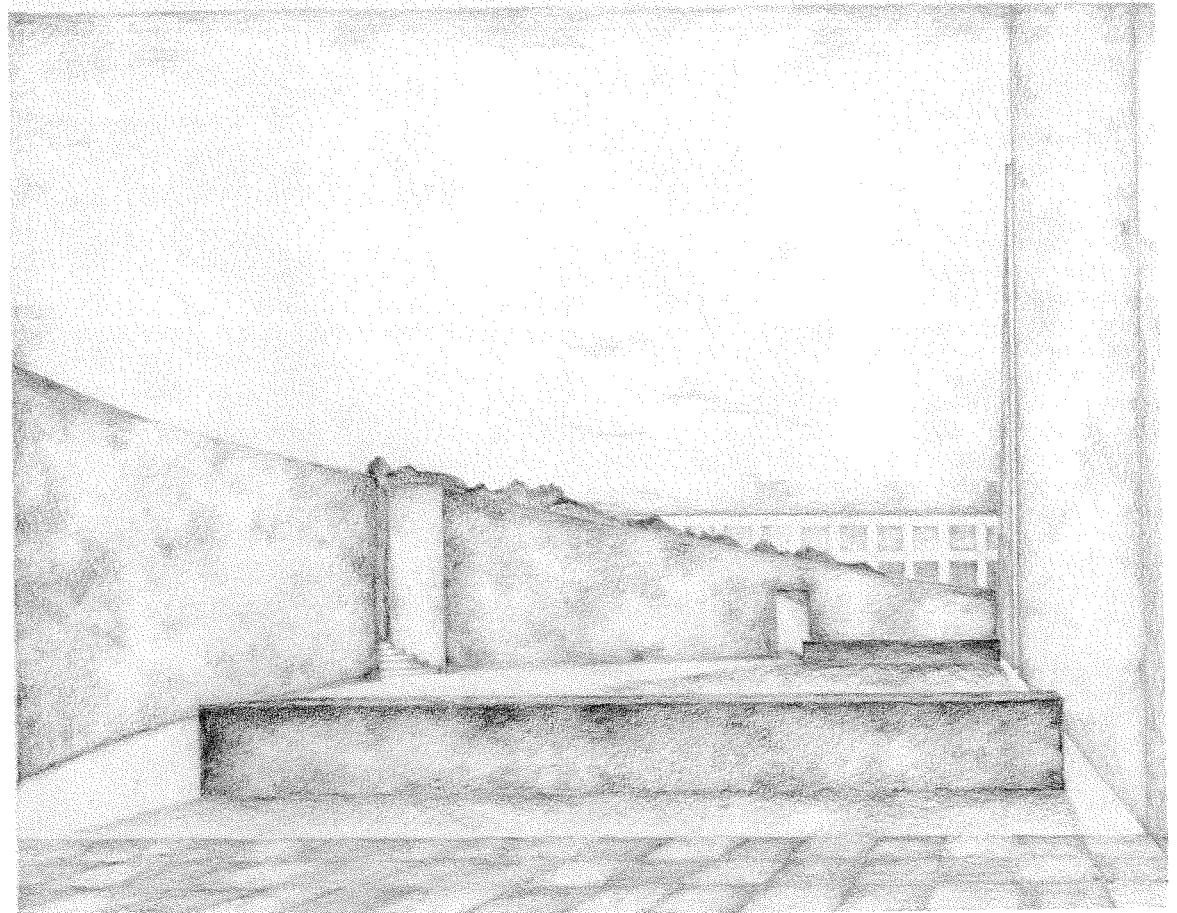
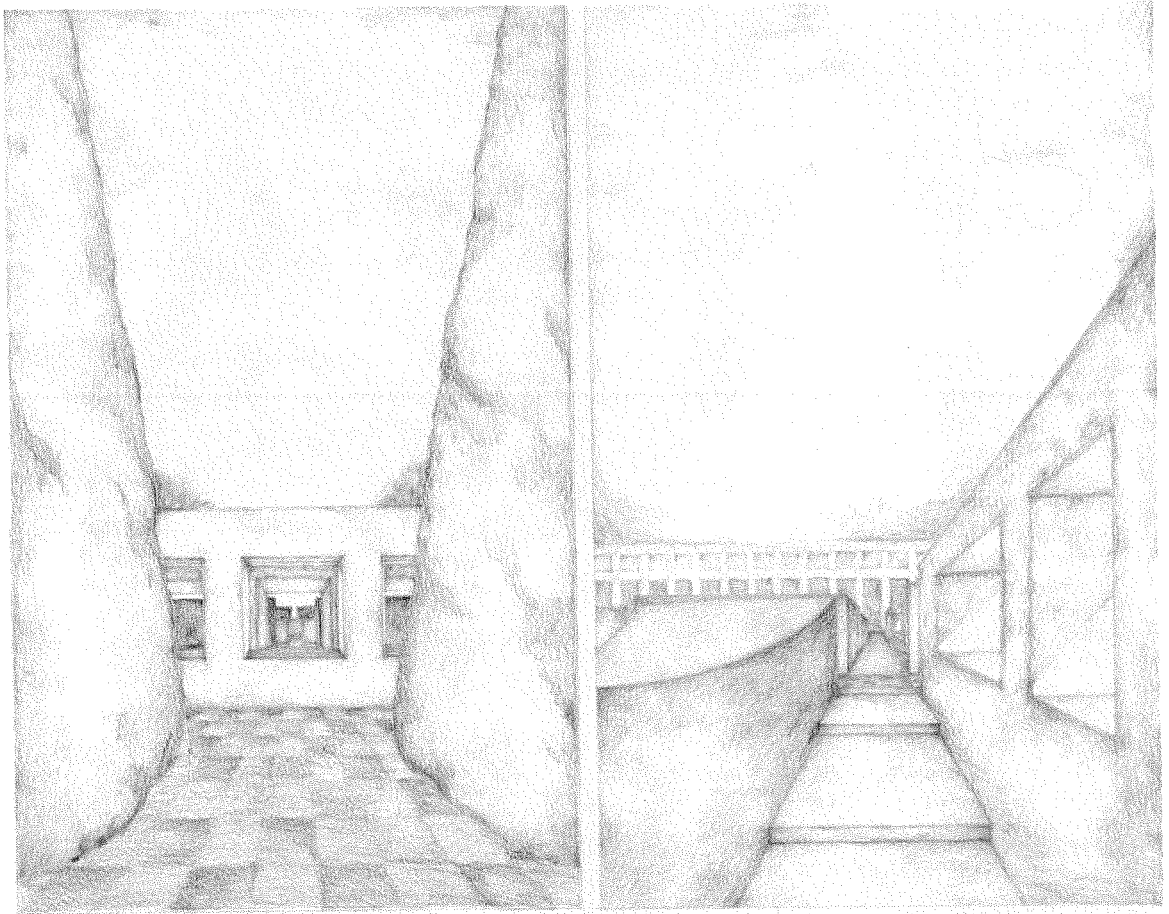
Beyond the flower border, pressed deep into the earth, is a court of stone and water. Eleven water trays, filmed with water and separated by paths, are cut into the

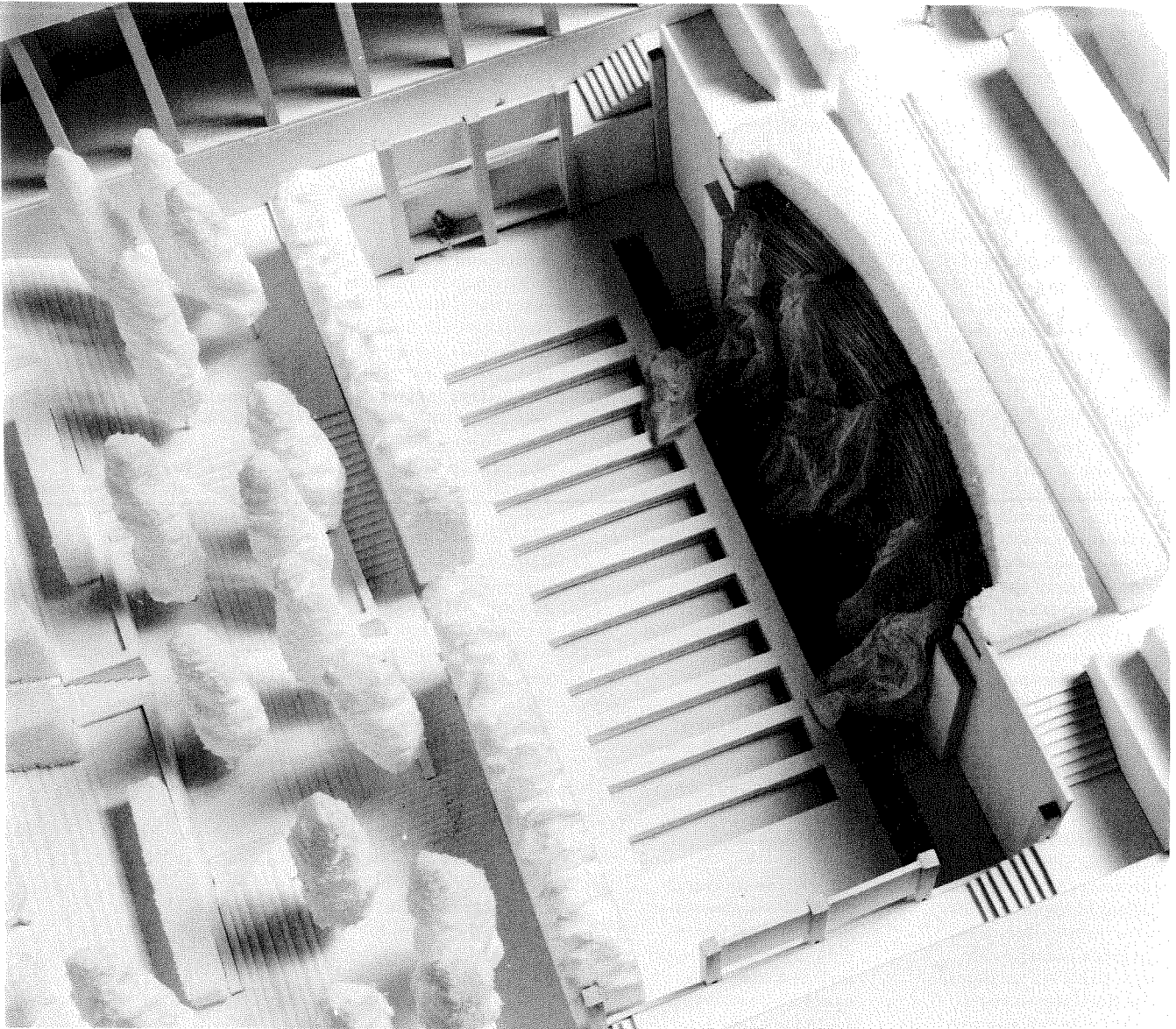
center. Each tray empties into a main pool at the base of a gently curved, twenty-five-foot-high wall of rock, bound at each side by cut stone pillars. Water pipes—like those found in cleft rock springs—pierce the wall at the top, pouring water in summer and accumulating ice in winter. The ice and water wall is shadowed and quiet, separated from the city's noise. It is a room for the sounds of water and the fragrance of moisture. The north-facing water-wall reflects the color of the sky and prevents the warming rays of the winter sun from disturbing the thick, blue ice. The north wall is a twenty-foot hemlock hedge.

Access to the water court from the south is provided by a pair of partially walled stairs. Beneath them, recessed sitting chambers offer secluded vantage points. From the north, a stairway directly descends the geometrically terraced slope through a grove of columnar evergreens that heightens one's sense of vertical change.

Throughout the garden, moveable wooden lawn furniture can be pulled into areas of sun, or into pools of shady solitude.







"Burial in a sacred grove is an ancient privilege."

Paul Shepard

Oh, don't talk to me about gardens and spatial poetics, *A la recherche du temps perdu* and paradise. The only paradise, as Richard Ellman says, is the one that has been lost. Who do you know who has made it all the way to *Within a Budding Grove*?

Where I grew up we had the "Old Back Road." You got to The Road (a foreign-country-in-the-suburbs complete with abandoned farmhouse, snakes and an occasional drifter sleeping off a drunk) by traversing a hundred yards of terrifying and exhilarating forest. Who can say if any Road adventure has been manifest in my work, but I sometimes wonder if my can of buried pennies ever became some other kid's miraculous discovery.

A friend who lives in a Korean Buddhist monastery writes, "There aren't any gardens in America anymore." And I think I agree with him, at least in the sense of garden-as-paradise. It wouldn't be so verbalized, but everyone seems to believe that they can/should/must make use of somebody else's paradise as their own.

Yeah, it's a sign of the times that most designers don't perceive the signs of the times (or are unable to make use of this perception if they do). But since when is that new? Lacking vision or insight or courage, steal somebody else's. However, one person's vision is another's vertigo; insight — insanity; and courage, well, call me collect if you find any. One thing I do know, it doesn't spring parthenogenetically from freestanding walls painted primary colors.

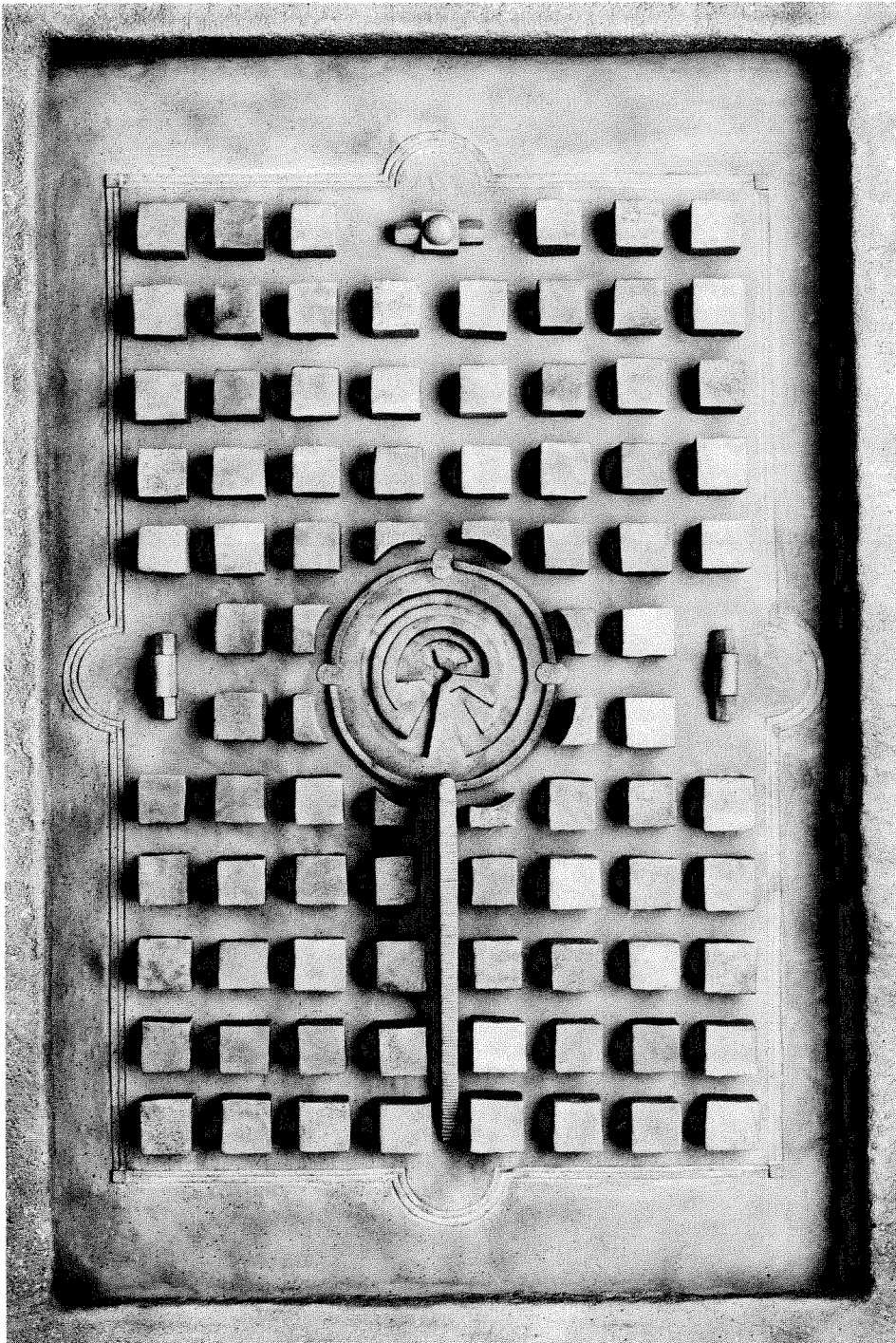
Yes, today's predicament is a bit more perplexing than Venturi's in '66. We can't shock anyone anymore. Even Hilton Kramer knows: "That the culture (Picasso) set out to attack and transform proved to be more resilient in its response to this assault than anyone at the time had reason to expect; that it showed itself capable of absorbing such assaults and profiting from them — this, I should have thought, would now, in the next to last decade of the twentieth century, have become an acknowledged datum of critical intelligence." No, we may not be able to shock them anymore, but the audience double-dares us to try, and then books the place for the Debutante Ball. What is a designer to do?

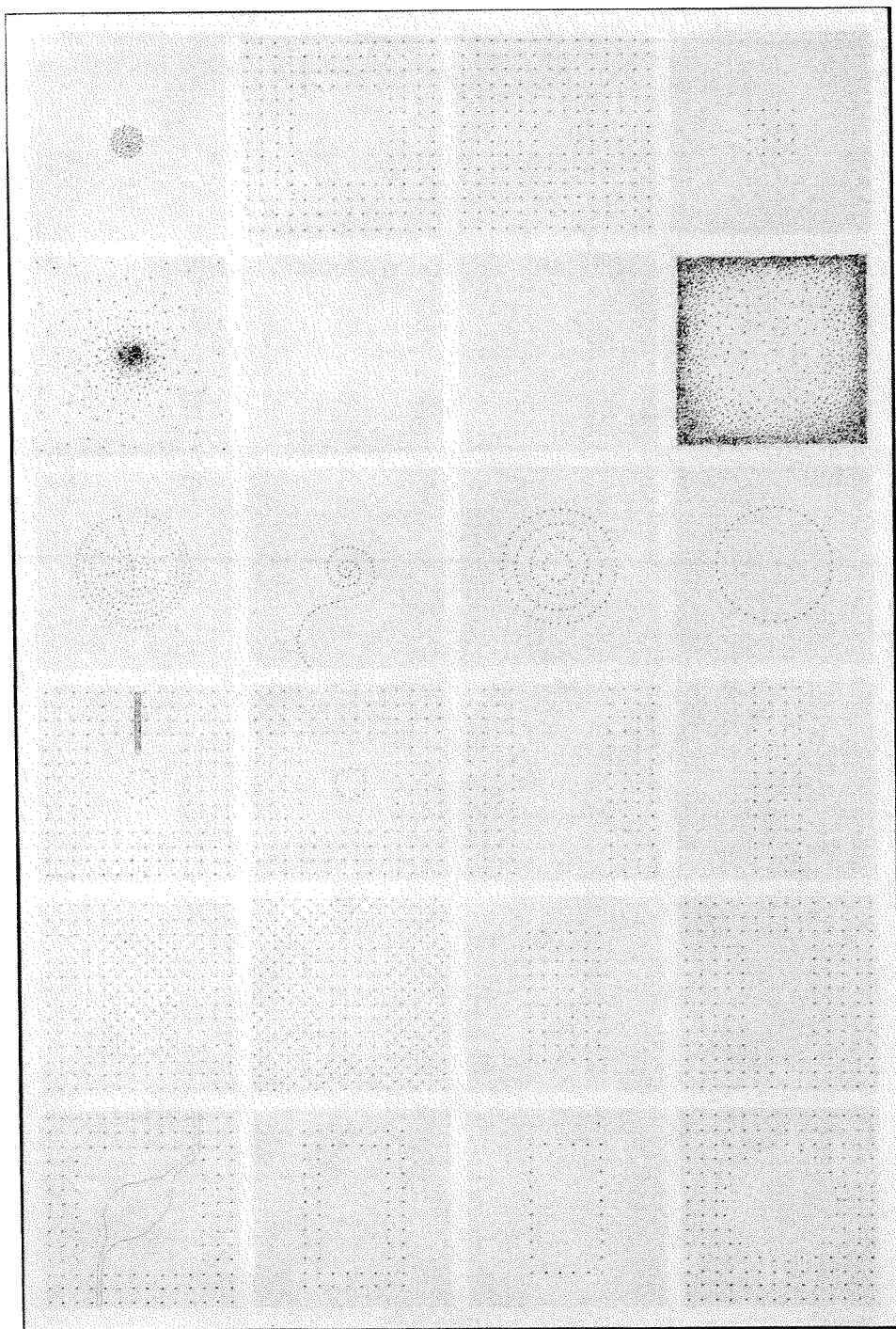
But maybe I'm wrong. Maybe Bob did his job *too* well. Maybe designers are *too* perceptive. If Barthes is right that what distinguishes so-called advanced societies from those of the past is that they consume images rather than beliefs, then all those purloined pillars are just what the public ordered.

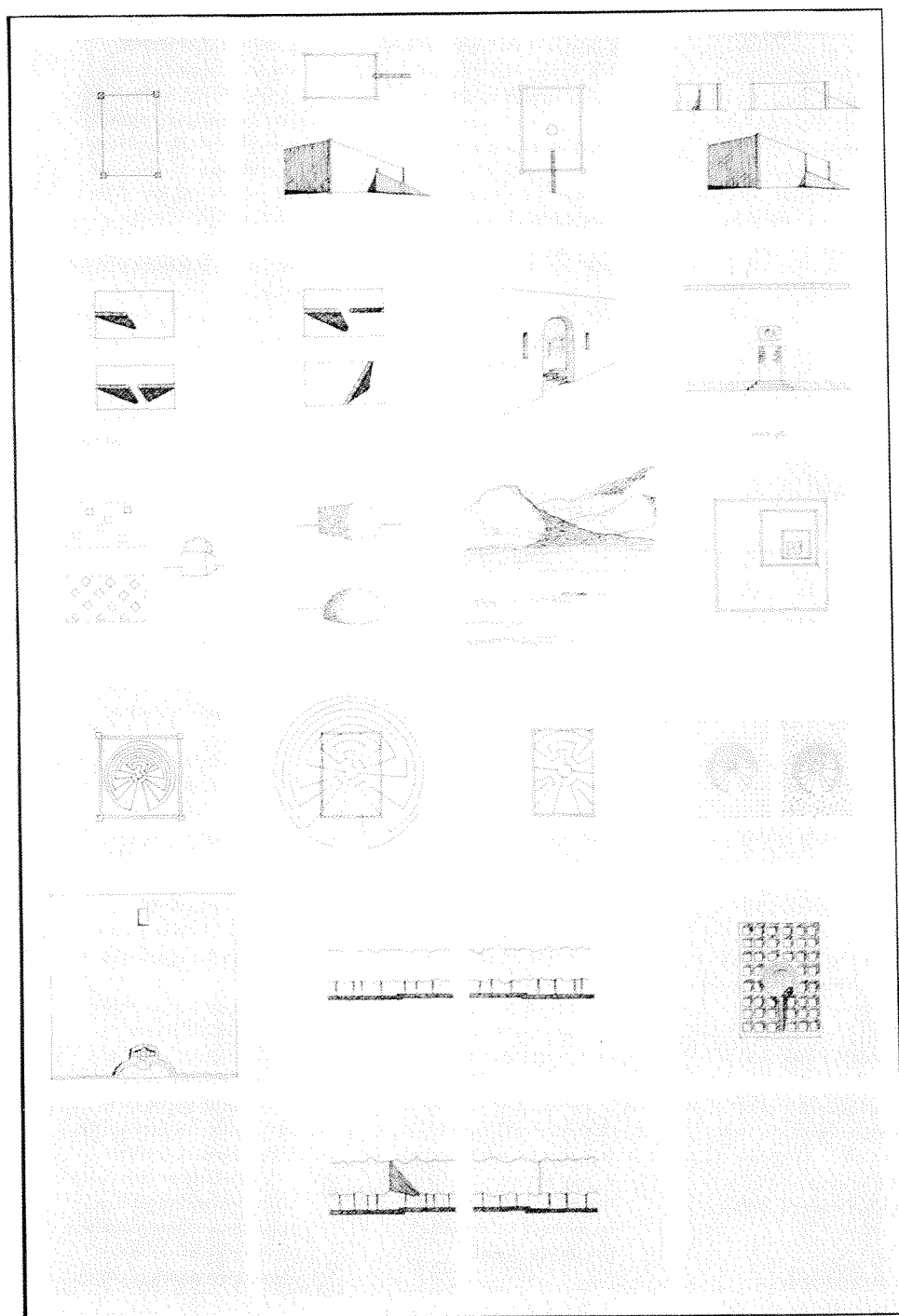
In such light, this project — a private cemetery — flies in the face of the contemporary. For what aspect of human experience is more saturated with notorious and blindly-held beliefs than death? You might say that this garden offers the opportunity to employ one's beliefs or to have their absence exposed.

You'll want to know that Valanakis's *Oedipus* was researched and that the labyrinth is of Pima origin. Sure, at one time or another we've all coveted the artist's secret code. But don't express intentions compromise your response? Perhaps we need to decide if Duchamp was right when he said that the most important thing about a painting is its title.

The cubes are clipped horsechestnuts; the pavilions trained and clipped yews.







This garden in the mountains above Malibu is a retreat for scientists, theologians and convicts. Each personality is intended to represent a different aspect of the human psyche: the empirical, the spiritual and the irrational.

Hydrotopia is a symbolic journey into the subconscious using water as the primary metaphor. Water runs throughout the site and can be regarded as a stream of consciousness. It symbolizes the differences in the realities we face—pathos and ethos, rational and irrational, sacred and profane, desire and death, moral and immoral, real and surreal. Water acts as the clarifier and the purifier; it unifies as it distinguishes parts of our existence. Water is collected at various points: some planned by humans; some ordained by nature. It is expressed in various states and its forms include water steps, troughs, chadars, well water, a boiler, a reservoir, a pool, a stream, a creek, a spiral fountain, a water wall.

The mountain is symbolic of alchemy; it is a very risky place. Fire or the absence of water is a necessary ingredient. For some plants, fire is needed to germinate seed pods.

The diagram of this mountain retreat is suc-

cinctly described as an isolated circle that is penetrated solely by a funicular, the only method of entry which brings one to the compound's major area.

At the center of this glorious circle is the ossarium, the sum of past lives and a place where the past is stored. Located on the steepest of slopes and covered with impenetrable brambles and tangles of the meanest chaparral, it remains permanently fixed in our memory.

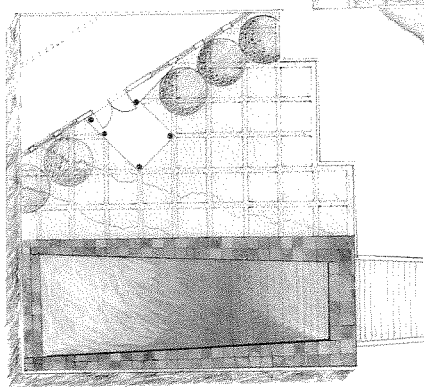
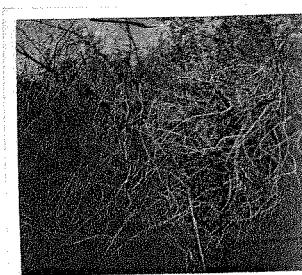
The scriptorium library tower, center for knowledge and the exchange of ideas, is crowned by a satellite dish with a radio-transmitting device. The base of the building is marked by a plinth of topiary which encloses outdoor reading rooms used by the scholars, theologians and scientists. The convicts maintain, prune and feed the experimental orchard and vine-covered pergola located just outside these reading rooms. Below, on other curved terraces, new native hybrids are cultivated. Water slithers down the curved terrace wall and emerges from a spiral fountain.

An allegorical garden, Hydrotopia functions as a refuge or retreat in which confrontation and discovery are achieved by synthesizing symbolic elements. Yet while the underlying

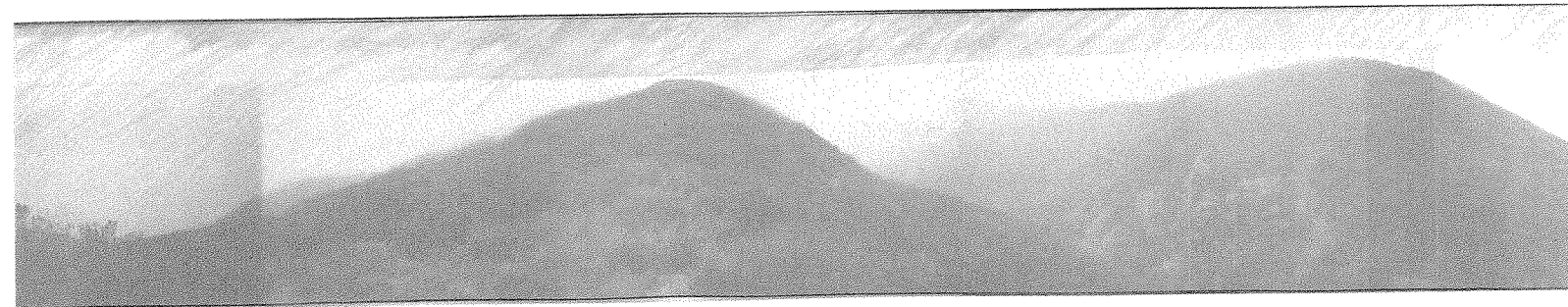
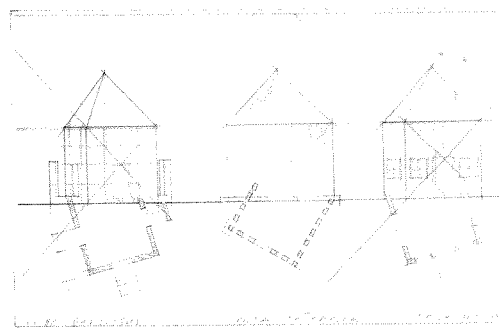
theme is the journey into the subconscious, the garden's imagery is superimposed with unrelated, disparate elements. Scattered references in this garden cannot always be reconciled with one another.

Hydrotopia should be viewed as a series of suggestive fragments that can be brought together as a whole only by those who walk its ritual paths. The garden invites this circumambulation, for in a real sense there is no destination other than exploration and self-discovery through interlocking but not cohesive visual metaphors.

The French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan has observed that "Discontinuity, then, is the essential form in which the unconscious first appears to us as a phenomenon . . . discontinuity in which something is manifested as vacillation." The discontinuity of Hydrotopia mirrors the vacillation within ourselves. The garden's denizens represent different and fundamentally contradictory aspects of the human mind. In Hydrotopia, landscape becomes something more than a pretty garden; it functions like a language, uncovering through its discontinuities deeper meanings within the mind.



Swimming Pool



VIEW FROM SCRIPTORIUM TOWER

Having the luxury of choosing any client, program and site for this exhibition, we tackled the design of a place for peace. We posed the question: What environment would make people confront the danger of nuclear war—and help them act to stop it?

We found a model for the kind of action we envisioned in Elisabeth Kubler-Ross's "stages of grieving" experienced by terminally ill patients. Going through the four stages enables the patients to deal with the reality of their condition and take action to help themselves. The stages include shock and disbelief when learning of their condition; numbness and depression at its ramifications; expression of anger and fear; and, finally, action to alter the condition.

Are we not all terminally ill unless we take action to stop the threat of nuclear annihilation? Yet we numb ourselves to its possibility. Reconstructing the stages of grieving may be one way to move us from denial to action.

As designers, we hoped that by representing physically each stage within a continuum, we could simulate the psychological sequence experienced by the grieving individual. We regarded each stage as a

place along a path, creating a journey that would lead the individual to understanding and expression, and thus to action. We now had a program. The question then became: What physical form should such a program take?

Gardens I-III, not depicted here, were a set of early explorations of our purpose. Garden I was a literal stroll garden in which programmed exhibition spaces were set along a path. Not satisfied, we created Garden II, with symbolic architectural forms that resonated feelings about nuclear annihilation, set within a perfected natural landscape. Feeling that we needed a closer integration of form and content, we designed Garden III, placing the symbolic architectural elements within an urban context; the garden journey would take place within a solid block of concrete.

Garden IV, the latest variation, is composed of a system of voids and spaces created by carving away at found places: a park and an underground subway and shopping area. Our principle now was the integration of form, content and context. In fact, Garden IV became its own context: indistinguishable from and continuous with its ordinary, everyday

urban environment in a manner that we intended to be disturbing and unnerving.

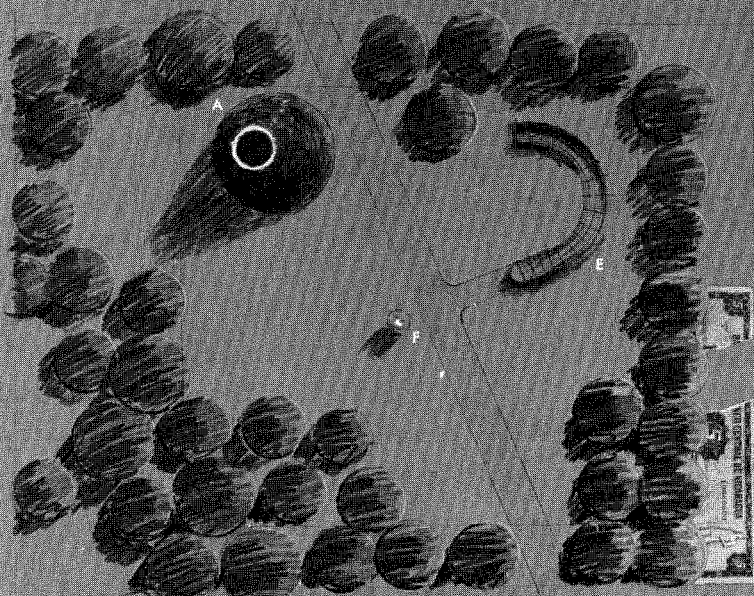
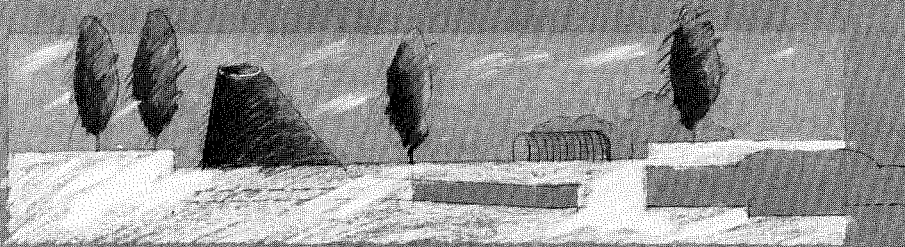
To make Garden IV, we assume that a benevolent developer has donated a 120-by-120-foot cube of underground shopping mall space and park land above it for a "place for peace." Located between two department stores and a parking garage, the area is accessible directly from the adjacent subway station. Long tunnels of raw concrete incline upward to a cone 60 feet in diameter; one is now at the midpoint of the cube. Fifty feet high with a 15-foot oculus skewed to the north and west, the interior walls of the cone, coated in gold, trigger associations with a temple, shelter, missile, infertile womb. Gas-fed flames are released through cracks in its walls and in the tunnels. After experiencing the constriction of the tunnels, one welcomes the grand scale of the cone, yet is shocked and awestruck by the flaming gold "inferno" it contains. Is this what it will be like. . . ?

Exiting the cone by another long tunnel, one has time to contemplate. Feeling numb, impotent and depressed, one emerges from the underground through a wrought-iron cage terminating at a

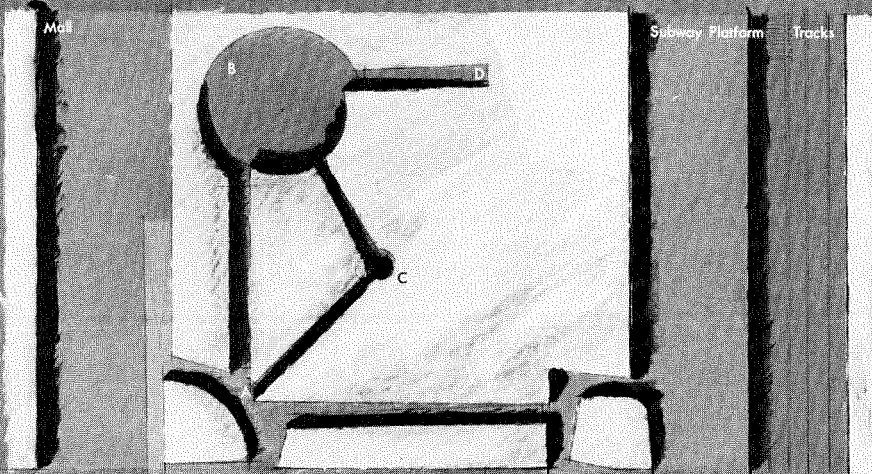
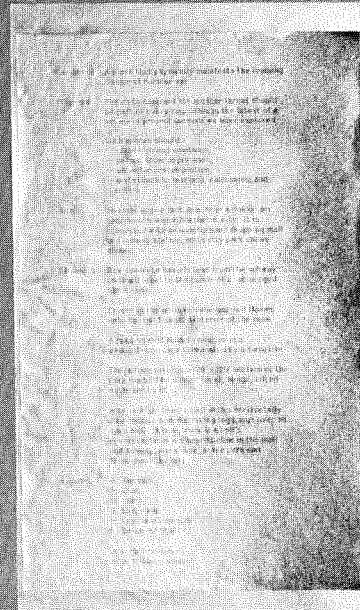
one-way turnstile in the city park above. One stops to regain one's bearings: the blackened exterior of the cone looms to the right, and is partially submerged in the grassy parkland at an ominous, strange angle. A path cuts past obliquely. This part of the park resembles the rest, with its open, grassy areas alternated with shady stands of trees. Yet one senses something unsettling here: the outline of the cube below ground is marked in the parkland above by a one percent tilt to the east. It is submerged six to eighteen inches below its surrounds, thereby set apart, made sacred, sunken.

Departing by the turnstile, one faces a large, cylindrical, bronze bell suspended above a shaft in the ground. Stepping up on a platform, one pulls the wooden striking log, horizontally suspended from a crossbar, and rams the bell. Effort is required; expression is achieved. When struck, the massive bell's reverberations are heard through the shaft in the mall and subway below and, above, in the park and throughout the city. Perhaps ultimately, through individual and collective actions, this audible beacon of distress and imploration will reverberate throughout the world.

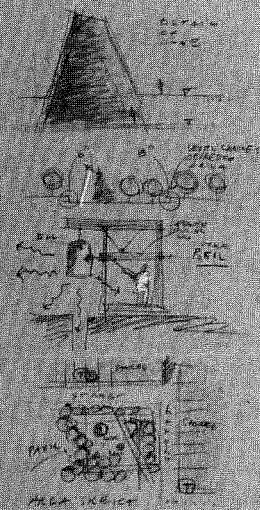
Places for Peace: GARDEN IV



Garden Level



Subway Level



"The real gardens do not last long—but it is only through them that the knowledge can be truly learnt and people can come to see what a garden truly is."
Abu-Ishak Chishtī

Throughout history, the garden has always been seen to represent man's view of his universe. It has functioned as a recreation of heaven on earth and has embodied his perceptions of the universe and how it is related to a specific reality on earth. My garden is related specifically to Persian mysticism in garden design. In Persia gardens are considered sacred and are thought to embody a mystical interpretation of creation. The entire garden and its vegetation functions as a continuous symbol of life and death.

The Sufis, a Persian mystical sect, used images of the garden as analogies or parables in their religious writings. The garden for them became a place of transcendence; a symbolic journey for those who were on the path to divine knowledge.

My garden is encased in a medieval triptych. The wooden frames, like garden walls, are metaphors of the body as shelter for the soul; the green oasis within.

The triptych doors, gates of paradise, are open only to those seeking divine knowledge. The second triptych contains perspective illustrations which define certain important places in the garden. These illustrations are set above a lower compartment which has a series of seven miniature pull-outs, each illustrating an aspect of creating a Persian garden. Each is intended to be an individual story.

This garden, located in north central Florida, was designed for my own use. At the very center of the garden a fountain with a single jet of water symbolizes the origin of life and the center of the universe. At the base of the fountain are four channels, representing the four rivers of paradise and the four corners of the world. The visitor enters from the south through a solid wood door in a blank, concrete wall.

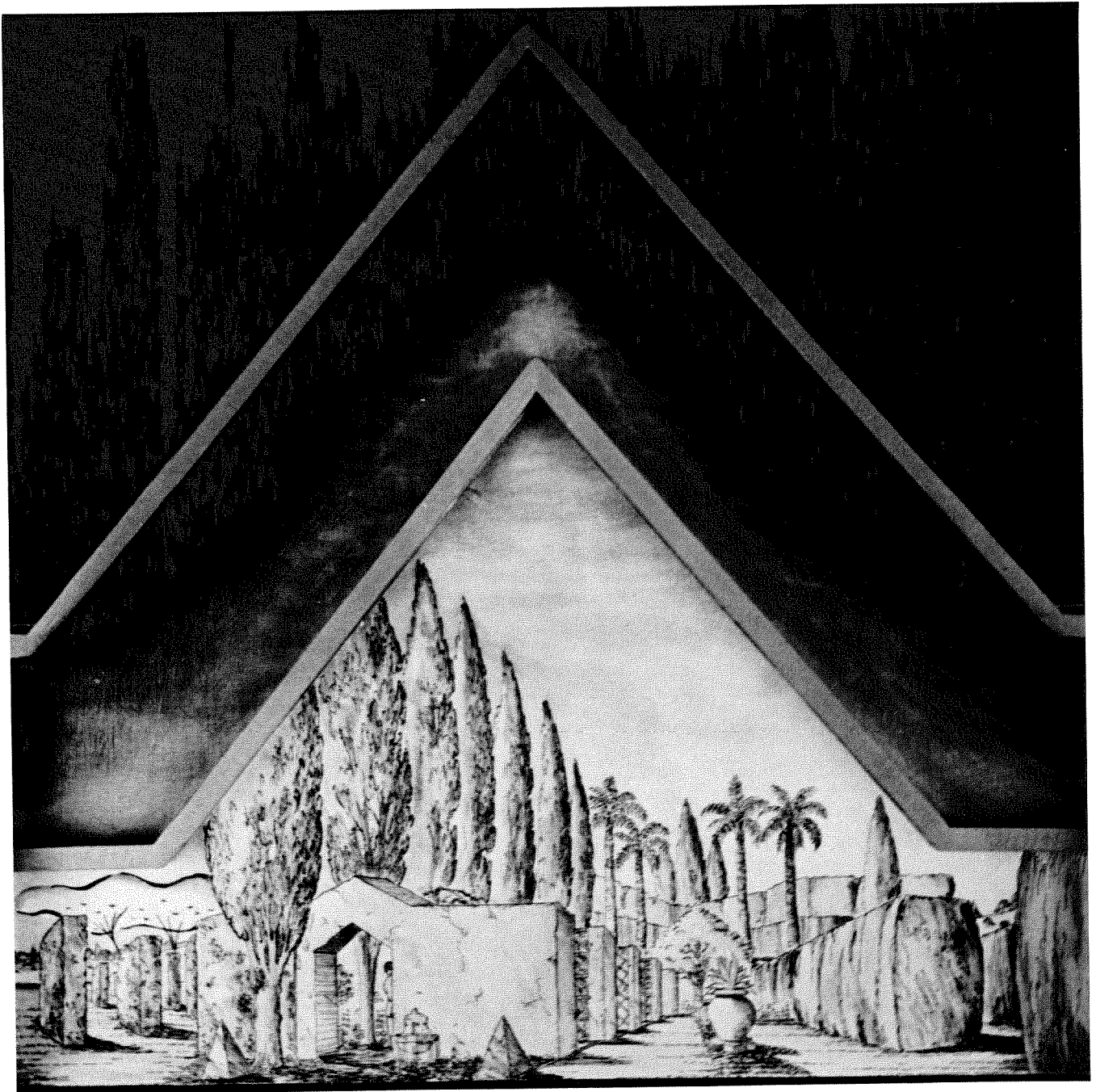
Inside, the garden in the simple gravel and stone space evokes the desert. At this point there is a choice: one can proceed straight to the center of the garden through a series of eight allegorical gates and chambers, or take a circuitous path that travels slowly towards the center. At each of the gates is a terrace with a different

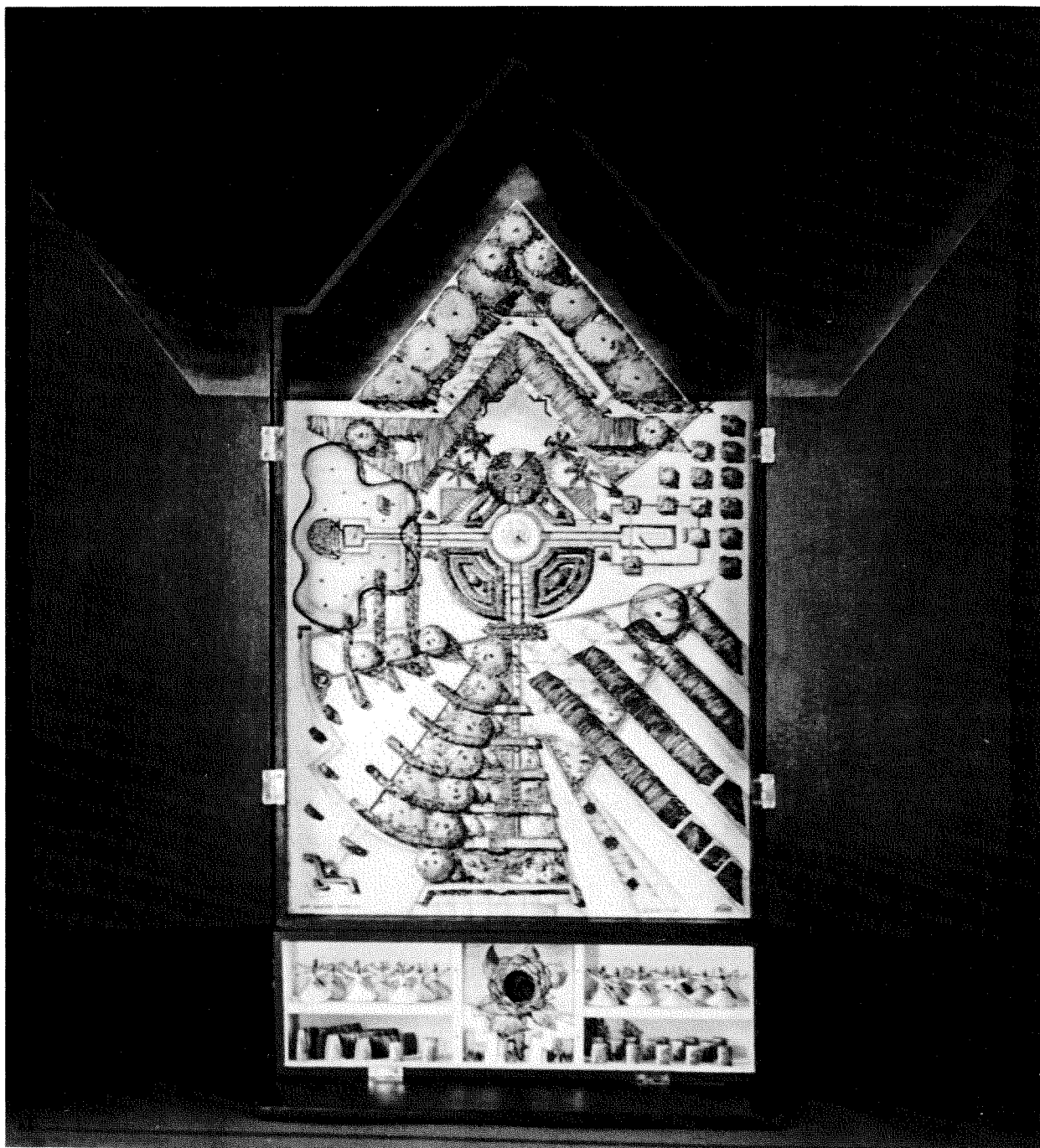
type of flower, representing the eight terraces of paradise as described in the Koran. A series of trellises lining the pathway is covered with flowering vines, radiating out from the center of the garden and dissipating into smaller sections the further one moves from the center—analogous to the image of the onion used in Sufi mysticism to represent the different stages one must pass through on the journey to divine knowledge. The eight cypress trees and eight orange trees along the allegorical path symbolize eternity and fertility. On the other side of this path, four hedges situated in the path of the prevailing winds serve as "breezeways" or "wind funnels" and direct the winds over a planted area of low-growing flowers and into the center of the garden, filling it with sweet aromas. At the central fountain channels break off to the east and to the west. A pool at the eastern end reflects the moon and the stars, symbolically connecting heaven and earth. At the western end a square fountain in a sacred grove of trees is framed by an elevated pavilion facing the central part of the garden. Two arbors flank the central fountain, reminding one that the arbor was the

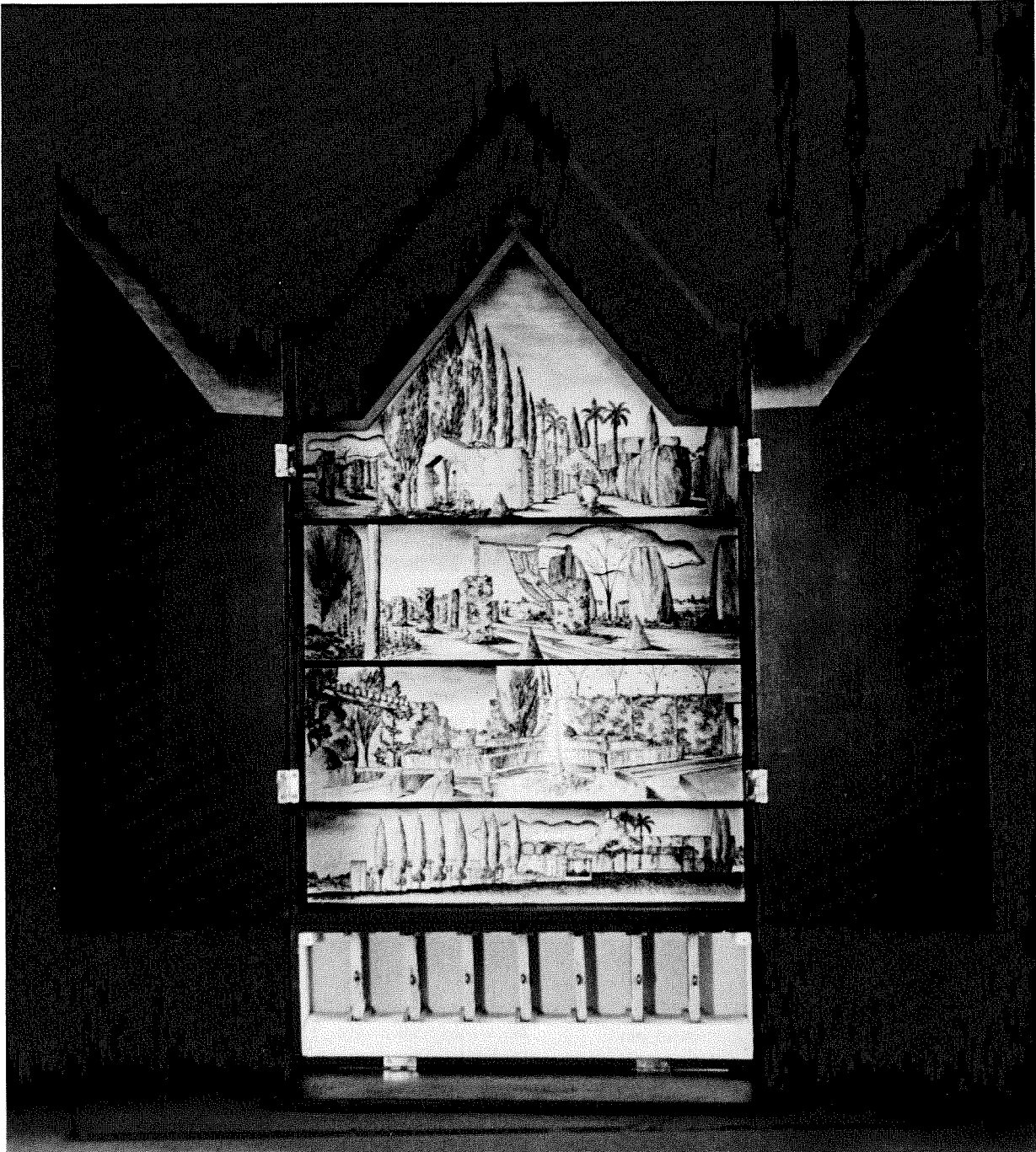
first structure to integrate architecture and landscape. Behind the central fountain stands the tree of life.

In the lower compartment of the triptych are two chambers with whirling dervishes. The dervishes are used here as an allegory of the garden, following the Sufi belief that when they twirl they become the center of their own self-perpetuated universe. In the center of this lower compartment is the rose, seen by Persian mystics as the most genuine symbol of true knowledge.

The garden is an attempt to reintegrate lost concepts of the spiritual in garden design and to combine elements of the beautiful with an individual microclimate. By studying the mysticism of the Persian garden, we can produce new ecosystems which may achieve a better balance between man and nature.







Problem: The site is an 86-by-23-foot roof on top of a six-story building in Manhattan's SoHo district. One enters the space through a small building at the east end—a living room attached to the loft space below—and by a stairwell from the west end.

The garden must be durable, easy to maintain and lightweight. The feeling of great space and openness, so precious to New York living, should be emphasized. The garden should also incorporate the elements of seasonal change, color and movement.

Solution: A large planting bed (19-by-62-feet) has been built up from the existing roof surface. This bed is 18 inches deep and is contained at the east and west ends by three steps, and at the south by a four-foot-wide path. The masonry is concrete block covered with an asphalt-based roofing compound. Visually, it will link the new construction to the existing roof's vernacular.

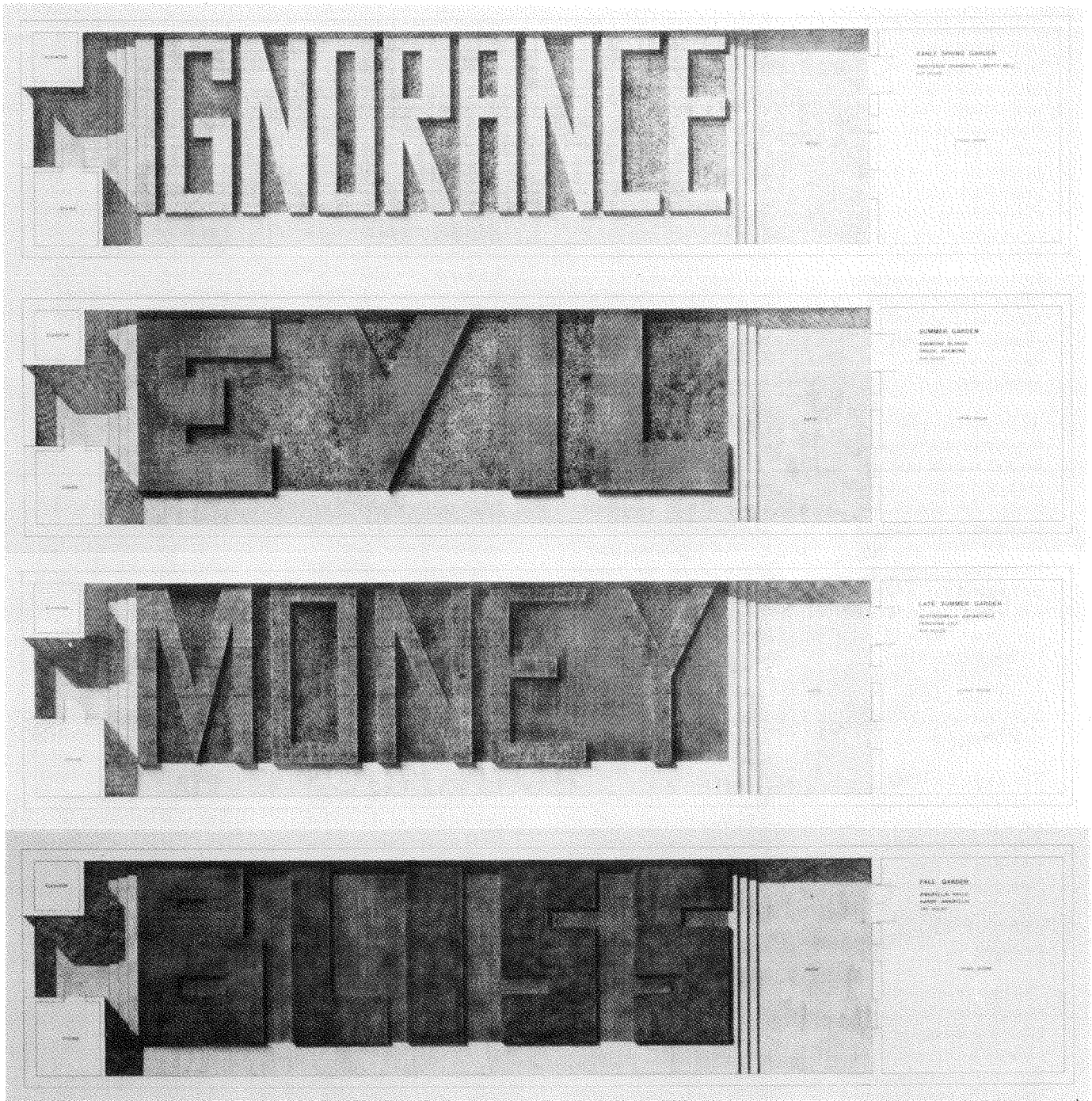
This planting bed will be filled first with 2 inches of gravel for drainage, 12 inches of lightweight soil mix,

and will be topped with 4 inches of sand. It will contain 4,712 6-inch clay pots, each pot containing one of four different species of bulbs. These pots will be placed in the planting bed according to a planting plan for each species. In order to properly place the bulbs, each pot and bulb has a specific number that places it within a numbered grid. Once the pots are placed, a specific pot in this garden can be located by finding the pot's coordinate numbers and letters (stenciled upon the walls and on the top steps) and then locating their point of intersection.

The bulbs selected for this scheme are daffodils, Greek anemone, Peruvian lily and hardy amaryllis. They bloom respectively in spring, summer, early fall and late fall. The bulbs have been selected for their low maintenance requirements and their ability to withstand frost and freezing temperatures.

The system is designed for flexibility. Bulbs can be replaced and new planting plans can be easily implemented.

The garden can be irrigated with a garden hose.



"Gardens always mean something else . . ." Robert Hardison in *Eccentric Spaces*

This garden is about edges and opposites. It draws its origins from a particular region—the Eastern Shore of Virginia—and from basic, powerful elements of past and present landscapes: the mount, the Garden of Eden, the bosque, the theater, the clearing, the maze.

Gardens are impossible things, really, never certain, always changing. Gardens are about the opposition of forces: a desire to manage, to control, to impose our own order in the midst of a much grander, overwhelming one. In attempting to define a "new landscape," we cannot avoid striving for the ideal, the rational, despite the circumstances that confront us.

This garden is about striving and perhaps never reconciling . . . it's about being poised forever on the edge. It is nearly unimaginable now to have a garden so confined that it rules out the world: a pure and private retreat. Yet we still seek these quiet comforting places. Places walled, concave, covered, canopied, human. But they can only be a part of experi-

ence, a memory, really: they must let you go, to look down, up, out, beyond. There is in a garden perhaps a beginning, but no real end.

The mount is about aspiration and reaching out. It is the remnant dune upon the shore. We always seek high ground. It is exalting, safe yet uncertain.

There are four pools, like wells seemingly bottomless. Tidal. Dark. There is a memory, too, of a more certain, paradisiacal world. The suggestion of four rivers crossing. An inversion, now a path. Steps down as if you might find a base.

The theater is the start of the journey. It is also rest and pretense.

The maze is a tidal maze. Saltmarsh grass inundated at high tide, channels revealed only at low tide. Seen only from the mount.

There is in this landscape the suggestion of cove, harbor, peninsula, island. The water is drawn inward: a canal along the north boundary. The land projects outward: a pergola links the garden to the mount along the southern boundary. Paths are by land and water. They compel you to engage the edge, the

perimeter, alternately exposing and protecting you. They also seek places: intersections that nudge you outward, seaward. The landscape is about connecting. Land to sea, water to sky.

The garden rooms, walled and textured, pay homage to agriculture: the cultivated landscape, the herbal, the *hortus*, a place of seasonal and momentary delight and sadness. There is the suggestion here of a smaller world, a microcosm.

The Eastern Shore is a stunning, fragrant place. The horizon line. Sky and water intersections. The land's relentless, minute, vertical punctuation and rhythm. It is a place of old mysteries and injustices. Fertility and despair. Where bonded, migrant humanity persists. Old gardens were special, smelling of rose and wisteria. Hanging like the old south in the air. There must be that memory here, but for all a garden's necessary privacy this must be a public place. Like the sea.

There is the relic earth, boatlike. Trees in cemetery pose. A once and future place. Walled yet inviting. It is truly in between. Neither

docked nor adrift. Searching. Old trees like sentinels, grave-stones worn by wind. The wind is soft and charging.

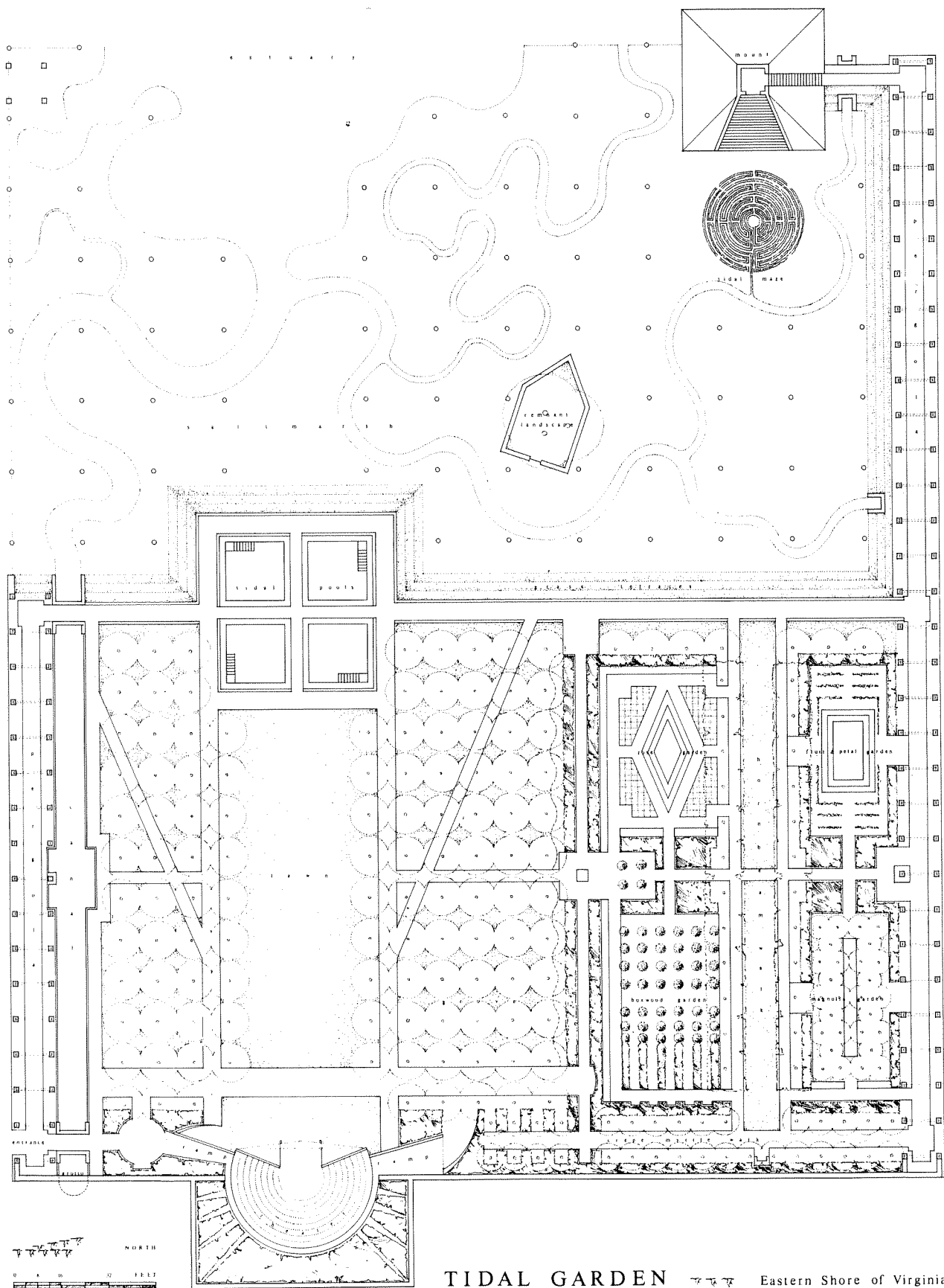
This could be a most telling place, really. A garden park donated to the community by NASA officials from Wallops Island. Near Chincoteague. Those who will see this in infrared are still uncertain. Boundaries. Elements. There would be a telescope on the mount.

There are places and prospects here, but perhaps no rest.

The garden begins with symmetry: nine squares aligned. It grows and splits and migrates. Fixed positions that come and go.

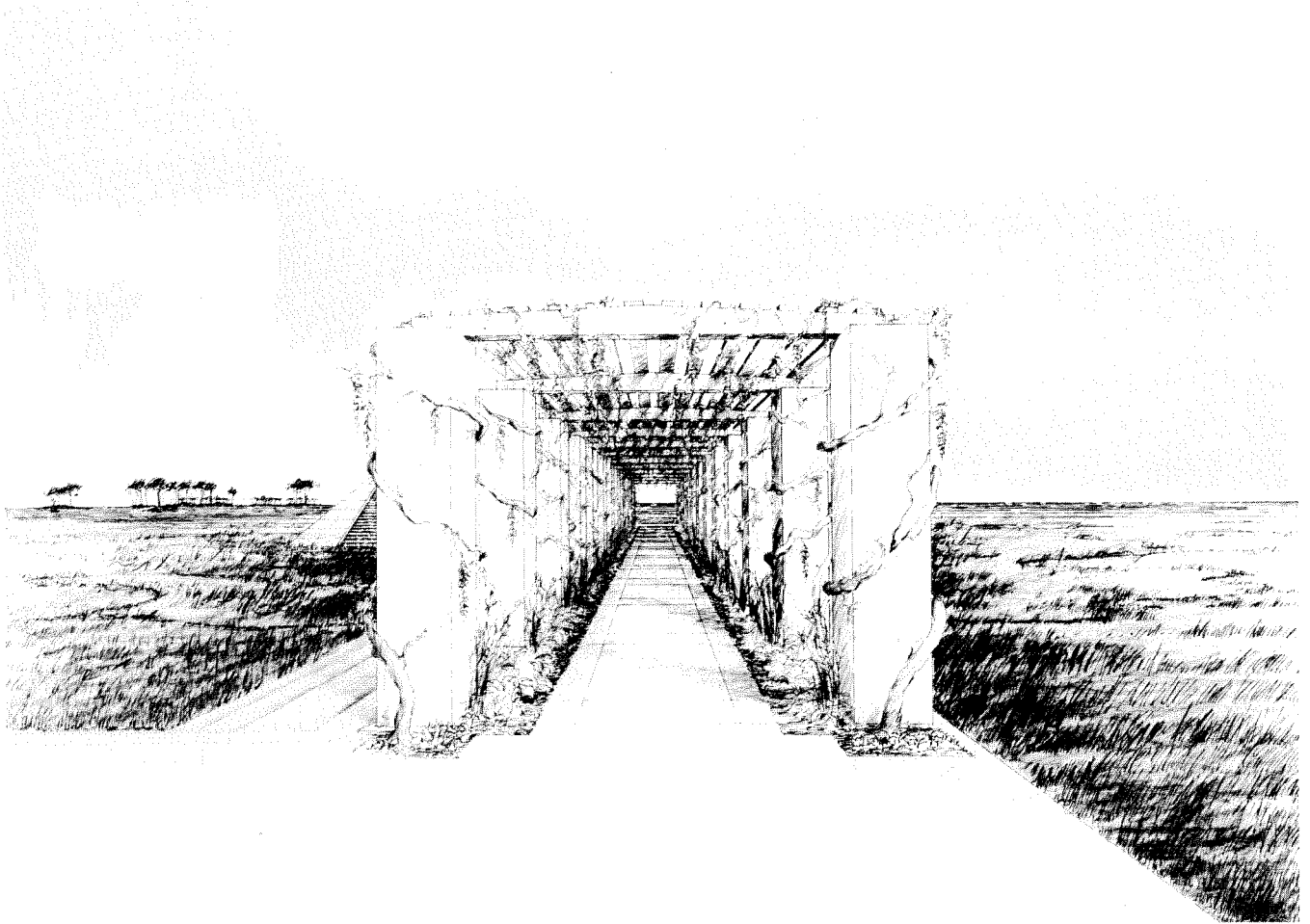
Erosion, nature, reflection.

Old places and memories.



TIDAL GARDEN Eastern Shore of Virginia





Transforming the American Garden: 12 New Landscape Designs

Excerpt of Original
Exhibition Program
Statement

Illustrations for the exhibition summary are reprinted from the catalogue Transforming the American Garden: 12 New Landscape Designs, published by the Harvard University Graduate School of Design.

The catalogue was supported by a grant from the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in Fine Arts.

Additional funding was provided by the New England Foundation for the Arts, a consortium of the six New England state arts agencies; the Daniel Urban Kiley Lectures & Exhibitions Fund of Harvard University Graduate School of Design; The Architectural League of New York; the National Foundation for the Arts, a federal agency in Washington, D.C.; Landscape Forms, Inc., Kalamazoo, MI; State Street Bank & Trust Company, Boston; and William H. Frederick, Jr., and the Hubbard Educational Trust.

The catalogue may be purchased from the Special Programs Office, Graduate School of Design, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA 02138, for \$20.00, which includes shipping costs.

“So that all the designs will have a common starting point for discussion, your landscape should address the flower in some way. We chose this theme because built landscapes and gardens could not exist today without the ability of man to use plants as an artistic medium. The fields and forests of flowering plants were the landscape until man transformed it. It should not be viewed as a ‘flower garden,’ but as an uncompromising examination of the sources of landscape design. Since flowering plants have been a subject of all art forms (structures and morphology as well as blossoms), the flower should be inspiration for new directions and ideas.

“The flower has aroused an astonishing gamut of emotional and philosophical responses, and is a propitious point of origin for your design. Be it cultivated or wild, sculptured or organic, on trees or on annuals in pots, the flower must have a place in your garden. Obviously, your

consideration of the flower will serve as a springboard for a discussion of the eternal questions facing any garden designer: man’s relationship to nature, his role on the earth, and his hopes, fears and dreams of the future.”

Jory Johnson

Garden design is a transformation of nature into a visionary and symbolic expression; it is not merely an ordering of plants within a described boundary, which might be termed landscaping. Parks, larger landscapes and even most backyards are shaped by an accrual of artifacts and interventions such as roads, buildings, playing fields and monuments. They are a collective expression of popular culture, while a garden is a singular expression. This is more a critical judgment than a definition, but it is important to realize that a garden can be a very public place. Gardens are distinctive not for their private nature, but for the designer's intention.

What, then, is an American garden? Like architecture, gardens in the United States during the 18th and 19th centuries were strongly influenced by European models. Often, they were copies of European gardens with little regard for their context or meaning. In the 20th century, this eclectic borrowing broadened to include Japanese references, as well as the abstraction of functional forms from nature. American garden design has not been widely regarded either as a fine art worthy of

serious investigation and critical analysis or as fertile ground for psychological and metaphysical speculation. By describing the garden in subcategories such as walks, groundcovers and walls, many garden publications have reduced the idea of the garden to a combination of ingredients which provide comfort, function and horticultural display.

Any meaningful discussion of the American garden must address the American landscape. In the nation's early days, the Edenic wonder and transcendence of its unspoiled beauty lured the painters of the Hudson River and Luminist schools with images of primal creation. In their vast canvases, man is a tiny spectator. Americans, however, soon learned to domesticate this majestic landscape. The wilderness was tamed through celebration of anomalies such as New Hampshire's Old Man of the Mountain, or by framing photo opportunities of the Grand Canyon and other scenic wonders. Today, the grandest views of Niagara Falls are so enshrined in popular culture that they can never again inspire the awe captured in Frederick Edwin Church's paintings. For the designers in this exhibition, a

field of California poppies, a row of Siberian iris or a tangle of chaparral have become symbols of the formerly sacred and sublime landscape. It is no longer the spectacle of Niagara Falls but the daily ebb and flow of a Miami tide that embodies the spiritual essence of nature.

Many of the participants in the exhibition, free to invent their site and context, produced designs which exemplify a strong response to ecology and regional culture. But they do more than mimic motifs or regional styles: they transform aspects or emblems of the regional landscape into gardens where one can make spiritual connections to one's native culture and values. The gardens are not only sited along the Virginia coast or on a Midwestern farm, for example, but also express the "bonded humanity" of Virginia's past and present, or the independent, practical nature of the Illinois farmer.

The range and diversity of its sources make it difficult to define the American garden. At the same time, these are the very qualities which make the garden a provocative field for artistic exploration today. Americans are not beholden to the almost

oppressive traditions of Europe. At the same time, the diversity and vigor of this country's heritage grants its designers the freedom to borrow from sources as widespread as Sufi mysticism and Pop Art. But if the American garden does not really exist as a single, identifiable form, how can it be transformed? The twelve designers in this exhibition do not invent new forms, but revise traditional garden elements such as bosques, hedges and fountains to formulate designs with new content and meaning. The transformation of gardens from eclectic ensembles to cohesive, legible designs is the underlying theme of this exhibition.

There are many precedents for symbolic expression in garden history. A prominent example of a narrative and symbolic garden is Henry Hoare Stourhead, built in England in the 18th century. Hoare lost many members of his family through illness and tragic accidents, and sought to express his sense of despair and rejuvenation by constructing a symbolic journey in his garden. He tried to universalize his private sorrow through classical allusions to Aeneas's journey to the underworld in search of his dead

father and through the sensory experiences of his garden.

Many of these twelve designers describe their gardens through a similar narrative of its parts, confident that one would find the emotional experience of their garden's intention compelling.

Henry Hoare's vision, as expressed at Stourhead, was not as strong an influence on American garden design as that of his compatriot and contemporary, Capability Brown. Brown's gardens, devoid of classical allusions and Claudian motifs, did not express philosophical ideas about the landscape, but rather exploited the "capabilities" of a site to yield a pleasing composition of trees, fields and water. Long before architecture was shorn of ornamentation and classical orders, Western gardens, partially through Brown's influence, had become abstract compositions of self-referential forms. Yet designs in this exhibition, like Henry Hoare's, reflect an interest in symbolic expression rather than in the lure of abstraction.

From the time a shaman stood in front of a cave painting and recited the myth or tale that inspired it, words have

been a necessary part of art. In America, gardens have been impoverished by a denial of meaning in favor of an emphasis on craft. The personal statements of each designer in the exhibition are part of a vital effort now emerging to develop a theoretical context for landscape architecture.

By examining old assumptions and offering new challenges, these designers have expanded the scope of the American garden. But the garden can only hold ideas which can be expressed in physical form. Once inside a garden, we are caught in the immediacy of the experience. We can never react dispassionately and intellectually, and one problematic aspect of any design exhibition is the effort required to imagine oneself within these gardens, experiencing them spatially from dawn to dusk. The designs all strive to create an American garden capable of embodying a sense of ourselves. If they are to succeed, these gardens must be part of a larger order of meaning as well as significant guides to the future of American gardens.

Susan Frey

Dear Norman,*

You and I haven't talked about gardens in a long time, but I thought you ought to know. You see, there are people who design gardens (you), people who would *rather* design gardens (architects), and people who care for gardens (John Q.)—and they don't talk to each other very much either. Our simple dream of a garden renaissance in America has acquired a certain monstrosity. The numbers are there (according to Gallup our #1 leisure activity), but "the movement" has been bloated by elitism and faddishness.

The good news is that landscape architects have come out of the closet to re-embrace the garden as the essence of their discipline. And they are beginning to talk among themselves. I've just come away from their first formal conversation,

an exhibition called "Transforming the American Garden." It was ragged, to be sure, yet each garden was a genuine engagement with form and meaning.

There were a couple of healthy, enigmatic kiss-offs, but they were fun to see. After all is said and done, it is really no less serious a point that the garden is as much a castle as is the home: you can and should do anything with it that you damn well please. Just ask Magic.

The exhibition seeks the spirit of the era through design inquiry. Its title is a set-up. Inquiring minds like me (and you) will be less concerned with the questions than with the answers. You will pick up on the common themes: What is the relation between form and content? (A formal preoccupation with solids reminded me of pushing food around on a

plate: some good stuff here, crucial to gardenmaking, but cold-hearted when it's the *only* food on the plate.) What is the relationship between physical context and natural process? How can design affect behavior, for personal or social healing? Who is the garden for?

When you get the catalogue, or better yet, see the show, I hope you'll spend a little extra time with the gardens that ask these questions in an eloquent matrix. Harkness, Byrd, Krog and Tegnell, Van Valkenburgh, they have conceived gardens of spirit and personal dimension. Can the renaissance be far off?

Love,
Susan

*Norman Johnson was the first editor of *Garden Design* magazine, which he and Susan Frey created in 1982.

The Garden and Pastoralism

Leo Marx

My attitude toward landscape gardens has been shaped by my interest in American pastoralism. Indeed, the nineteenth-century image of America as “the new garden of the world,” whose hold on the native imagination has been so compellingly described by Henry Nash Smith in *Virgin Land*, was an updated version of Arcadia. It figured forth the ideal of a *via media* between European overcivilization and the wilderness of the western frontier. It was a pastoral landscape in the strict sense that it resembled the characteristic setting, a middle ground between the city and the wilderness, of the classic Virgilian pastoral. There Virgil’s idealized shepherds, whose lives presumably were not unlike those of actual herdsmen of the ancient Near East, guarded their flocks and played their flutes. Herdsmen were idealized in the ancient world because, according to our best current knowledge, they did in fact serve as *liminal* (threshold) or mediating figures whose situation allowed them to enjoy relatively contemplative lives with abundant time and leisure for music and love. The shepherd’s existence testified to the possibility that human beings could achieve a certain harmony between art and nature.

It is not unreasonable, I think, to connect the

sophisticated vision of simplicity at the center of pastoralism with the aspirations to which many, perhaps most, gardens lend expression. The impulse to create a garden, an inviting and peaceful place apart, has much in common with what often has been called “the pastoral impulse.” It is the desire, in the face of the growing power and complexity of civilization, to get away, to recover at least some pleasures of the natural in a setting marked by fewer signs of human intervention. In the past that impulse often was dismissed as not being sufficiently “progressive,” which is to say that it deserved the epithets “sentimental,” “romantic,” or “nostalgic.” In our time, however, when the recovery of past conditions may mean regaining access to breathable air, drinkable water, and land uncontaminated by toxic waste, nostalgia has begun to acquire a degree of intellectual respectability. Many contemporary gardens express a similar desire to recover—or preserve what remains of—a viable relationship with the natural environment.

Given these assumptions about the character of gardens, certain principles of landscape design seem to follow. A garden, for one thing, should invite us to enter an idealized setting, and it should provide those who do with an opportunity

to enjoy, if only momentarily, an alternative to the quotidian routine. And if, as one of the landscape architects in this show suggests, a garden necessarily lends expression to a world view, it should do so indirectly or inadvertently; in any event, it ought not to impose itself on the viewer. To enjoy the meditative possibilities offered by a garden, the viewer should be invited to partake of the act of mediation between civilization and nature. To use an Emersonian term, the “natural facts” that constitute the garden are the enabling conditions for the viewer’s meditative, or symbol-making, activity. But the meaning that the facts acquire depends on what they suggest to the viewer—on the significance that he or she attaches to what is and is not to be found there. The meaning has as much to do, finally, with what the garden setting does *not* represent—the importunity and dominating power of the built environment in which most of us live—as it has to do with the discernible attributes of that setting.

For these reasons, I prefer the less formal and cerebral gardens in this exhibition. They have fewer proselytizing designs on the visitor. My favorite is Warren T. Byrd, Jr.’s “Tidal Garden: Eastern Shore of Virginia” for its tantalizing mix of the wild, the moderately ordered, and the built. This

design, with its openness to the changes of nature—especially the changing tide—allows considerable scope for the viewer's imagination. The pastoral world view, with its focus on the tensions between art and nature, the sophisticated and the naive, the complex and the simple, is implicit in this garden. It seems to be aimed at placing the viewer in the mediating role characteristic of pastoralism. As the designer says, "there is in a garden perhaps a beginning, but no real end." Hence "the end," either in the sense of the meaning of the viewer's experience or in the more literal sense of "conclusion," is in large measure determined by the viewer.

For similar reasons, I am drawn to Vincent Healy's

theme of "The Garden as a Healing Place." Much of the appeal of pastoralism is contemplative, and this effort to renew the old idea of the "meditation garden" fits this tradition. Many incidental features of this garden—the pond stocked with bullfrogs, the bushes chosen to attract songbirds, night lighting—seem designed to do what a garden ought to do: invite the imagination. I also am attracted to Terence Harkness's "An East Central Illinois Garden: A Regional Garden." I like the idea of representing "the congruence between the landscape and the independent, practical farmers" of the region and of "demonstrating the power and qualities of a unique place." This mix of the formal and informal, the fields and farmsteads, is

engaging and, in spite of a certain excess literalness, it also allows considerable scope for the viewers' responses.

The gardens I have cited are not planned with a view to dominating the consciousness of those who enter them. They encourage viewers to discover the meaning of the natural facts and artful designs for themselves and thereby to share in the designer's enticing act of mediation between art and nature. They are American gardens designed in the spirit of native pastoralism.

On the Perils of Meaning

Robert B. Riley

Before we rush out to revive the art of the garden, it might pay to inquire as to what it died from, and why. From Kent's leap over the wall? From the appropriation of the royal gardens of Paris and the great urban park movement of the last century? From garden cities and belief in the innate moral and vascular benefits of open greenery, never mind spatial or social definitions thereof? From Corbu and his vision of nature as a great pastoral sward upon which point blocks would sit like placid cows in a Repton Redbook? From Tommy Church and *Sunset* and pools and patios and barbecues and garbage cans behind redwood screens? From all of us and our assumption that technology and liberalism would make the whole world a garden?

In the end, we inverted the garden. Our *hortus conclusus* is the wilderness, wired off for the pack-framed pure of heart, playing at paradise preserved, secure from the threatening utopia we have made of the world. When control of nature, once a defiant assertion of humanity against the terror of the universe, became a pleasant pastime and then evidence of corporate irresponsibility, is it surprising the garden died?

Marc Treib called gardening the lion tamer's art. It

was, spiritually as well as practically. The persistence of the garden and its power as symbol-carrier came from the psychic act of control over that which, at the last, we have no control. It came from the establishment of a human/nature, control/submission dialectic that was the near-universal surrogate for the only dialectic even more basic: life/death. It was the power of that dialectic that made the garden such a powerful collector, an attractor of all sorts of other dialectics and symbols, cultural and individual. But when the hungry lion has become a pussy to be pampered and protected, awe has likely become amusement.

So the question is not only whether we can revive the art of the garden, that formal and floral sensitivity and technique that finally died in the 1930s, but what our gardens can mean, indeed whether they can have meaning. These twelve gardens do not give very satisfactory answers to that question.

Most of these designers come on quite confident in their ability to revive garden symbolism to provide that "something else" that gardens are said to mean. Never mind that both modern and postmodern architecture, from paneled I-beams through gilded antennas to chrome-plated

capitals, came a cropper on this issue. Take any arbitrary motif, preferably camp, weave around it enough references familiar to readers of the *New York Review of Books* or *Sporting News*, and, presto, a SYMBOL! Is it so hard to understand that for a design to succeed as a powerful symbol, it must use symbols that are commonly agreed upon and not just individually selected, symbols that connote affective meaning and not mere intellectual cleverness, symbols that are placed in a context accepted as appropriate? Is it so hard to understand how tough a job that is in a culture as centrifugal and pluralistic as ours?

At one extreme, three of these gardens (Van Valkenburgh, Harkness, Byrd) are extraordinarily complex and conscientious attempts to solve this problem, through minimally arcane references to garden history, to regional landscape evolution, to dreams. If the relationships between form and meaning, between micro and macro, between your dreams and mine, are not always clear, still the hints and clues are rich and enticing. At the other extreme (passing, somewhere in between, the vision of nuclear holocaust as late twentieth-century sublime) are two gardens that seem to be about only themselves, garden as high tech (Falcòne

and Bueno) or low tech, multisensory immersion: sensible, sensuous, and satisfying (Healy). Maybe the time when gardens can mean something else is past and not yet come again.

Led Down The Garden Path

Betsy Cann

These twelve gardens are far more interesting as a group than as individual expressions of separate designers. As conceptual projects, they display a range of theoretical concerns that is both serious and refreshing, addressing issues as varied as the danger of nuclear war and the sensuous pleasures provided by flowers. As a group, they express some of the current interests of the profession of landscape architecture. In their display of a range of approaches to garden design, they also demonstrate the way in which ideas about the landscape are developed and refined.

Changes in design ideas come from a combination of two sources. Within a particular design discipline, one source is the investigation of forms and ideas inherent in the definition of the discipline itself. The other is the importation of forms and ideas from outside the conventional boundaries of the discipline. The interaction of these forces is a partial explanation of many significant developments in the history of the designed landscape. For example, the formal, Italianate residential garden common in America in the first few decades of the twentieth century was replaced in the 1940s and 1950s by the asymmetrical residential landscape influenced by modern ideals

of flowing space and informal suburban life, notions that had not previously been associated with landscape architecture.

Changes in design ideas come from a combination of two sources. Within a particular design discipline, such as architecture or landscape architecture, one source is the investigation of ideas and traditions inherent in the definition of the discipline itself. In landscape work this includes the nature of the landscape itself, the materials of the landscape, landscape types such as garden or park, and cultural notions associated with historic landscape forms.

The other source of change is the importation of forms and ideas from outside the traditional boundaries of the discipline. These ideas may come from other artistic fields, such as sculpture or architecture, or they may be adapted from more distant fields, such as literature or science. Sometimes these externally generated ideas are completely transformed in the service of a conventional landscape ideal, while in other cases the tension between the conventional and new sources is a visible element of the design.

Both tendencies are usually present in some form in every designed artifact, although every discipline goes through phases when

one or the other predominates. The history of the designed landscape in America offers numerous examples of these shifts. For example, the formal, Italianate residential garden common in the first few decades of the twentieth century was modeled explicitly on the landscape prototype of the Renaissance garden in Italy. This prototype was replaced in the 1940s and 1950s by the asymmetrical residential landscape influenced by modern ideals of flowing space and informal suburban life, notions that had not previously been associated with landscape design.

In the 1960s the residential landscape faded in importance to the profession of landscape architecture. It was replaced by a concern for ecology and the environment as a whole, codified by Ian McHarg in *Design with Nature*. With its basis in a scientific view of the landscape, McHarg's approach lacked an explicit aesthetic philosophy. This lack was a severe handicap in the design of smaller scale urban or residential projects, a problem the environmental design disciplines are now trying to remedy.

The focus of this exhibition on the garden demonstrates an increased interest in the more conventional, aesthetically motivated spectrum of landscape ideas. It is partially a response

to the limitations of the ecologically based planning approach of Ian McHarg. It also acknowledges several other aspects of contemporary design and theory: the architects' revived interest in history and the garden and the interest of many artists in working outside the gallery in the larger landscape.

The majority of the projects in this show address the ideas of the garden in an explicit, conventional way. Most of them use the elements of traditional garden design to investigate new contexts or new rhetorical content without compromising the viewer's ability to recognize them as gardens. The clearest examples of this are the gardens of Michael Van Valkenburgh, Terence Harkness, Warren Byrd, and Vincent Healy.

A smaller group of projects addresses the idea of garden in a less conventional way. Julie Messervy and Peter Droege, Martha Schwartz, and Pamela Burton and Katherine Spitz have all attempted to push the garden beyond its traditional boundaries in order to incorporate ideas about philosophy, art, and politics. This type of garden is less familiar than the other, but each one raises compelling questions about the possibility of using the garden to address broader issues.

The weakest aspects of this entire endeavor are those focused on the explicit professional definition of landscape architecture. By limiting the participants in the show to self-identified landscape architects with "demonstrated expertise in garden design," the organizers have trivialized their own efforts. The true agenda seems to be about defending the profession's perceived activity of designing the landscape from outside incursions by artists and architects. If the primary goal is investigation of the expressive potential of the garden and the flower, such a limitation has no legitimacy. And if the definition of professional turf is so important, the statement might have been made more eloquently by allowing it to be implicit rather than explicit.

Furthermore, the technical aspect of the profession is constantly reinforced by detailed information about plant species and maintenance details in cases where it is not relevant to the project. Steven Krog's note about plant materials might have some significance to his project, but even he doesn't seem to know what it is. Martha Schwartz's terse remark that her garden can be irrigated with a garden hose is in keeping with the minimalist character of the design, but it is just as opaque as her choice of words for the garden. This

stress on professional boundaries and technical expertise has been an unfortunate aspect of the profession since Frederick Law Olmsted.

As a landscape type, the garden is clearly broad enough to accommodate investigation of a diverse range of ideas. If any proof were needed, these gardens demonstrate the increasingly important role of theoretical inquiry and conceptual design in the field of landscape architecture.

At the same time, the idea of garden may eventually become a trap. The nature of a garden as a contained space designed by or for its proprietor may become a limit to the usefulness of the type. The conventional vision of the garden is not broad enough to be applicable to the range of projects and problems the profession must face and the landscape may address. This collection of gardens suggests a number of ways of investigating the formal and philosophical structures of landscape work. This must eventually lead to transformation of the idea of the garden itself.

Catherine Howett

In an essay published eighteen years ago in *ARTFORUM*, Robert Smithson posed the question, "Could one say that art degenerates as it approaches gardening?" When he later discovered the work of the eighteenth-century English landscape gardening theorists Uvedale Price and Richard Payne Knight—champions of a picturesque ideal that called for imitating nature in her wilder, more awe-inspiring and even threatening manifestations—he saw in them the antecedents of an understanding of landscape-making that had informed Frederick Law Olmsted's design of Central Park and that Smithson wanted his own work to reflect. His misgivings about garden design had to do with his sense that the "jeune Edens" pictured in the shelter magazines never reflected this more complex vision of ecological processes.

It took a long time for the historically conservative profession of landscape architecture to respond to the environmental art movement that Smithson helped to galvanize. Now it sometimes seems as if every formerly plain-Jane axis has been tricked out as a solstitial sight line. But there has also been some productive soul-searching within the profession, and the exhibition "Transforming the American Garden" reflects a growing interest in

re-examining the philosophic foundations of everyday practice in order to discover authentic new directions. Michael Van Valkenburgh, who conceived the show, rightly looks to the garden as the quintessential medium through which contemporary ideas of the landscape and insights into the man/nature relationship may be explored. The fifteen early-to-mid-career American landscape architects (there are three team projects) who were invited to submit designs for a real or imaginary, public or private, "ideal" garden on a roughly one-acre site would want to answer emphatically *no* to Smithson's query.

The exhibition and catalogue, with supporting statements by each designer or team, however, leave the rest of us believing that the potential of the garden as a viable expressive form for late-twentieth-century art still remains to be demonstrated. At the heart of the failure to prove the case is the ambiguous nature of the exhibition, in which architectural drawings and plans, sketches, and models are displayed as if they were themselves art objects. For Barbara Solomon, who came to landscape architecture from a career as a graphic designer, the drawing is indeed prior to the work and of equal importance with the landscape plan that is its subject. But for other entrants, the graphics

documenting the project proposals were the work of supporting staff—normal procedure in an architectural office but confusing in this context because in a number of instances they, too, are so self-consciously artful that the design concepts for the garden seem of secondary importance. Chip Sullivan's renderings for his "Persian" garden, complete with whirling dervishes, are displayed within medieval-looking triptych boxes, the wooden frames of which, he tells us, are "metaphors for the body as shelter for the soul."

In spite of the criticism implied in Stephen Krog's comment that "everyone seems to believe that they can/should/must make use of somebody else's paradise as their own," there is a good deal of rather heavy-handed borrowing of historic archetypes. Krog himself advises us that the labyrinth at the center of his garden cemetery is of Pima origin. Warren Byrd has combined a mount and a maze in his "Tidal Garden" for a site on the eastern shore of Virginia. The use of such elements is so familiar to us from their re-exploration in art of the last two decades (Byrd's maze, inundated and revealed through the rhythms of tidal flow, inevitably reminds us of the fresh simplicity, in 1974, of Richard Fleischner's "Sod Maze" for a Newport, Rhode Island, estate garden)

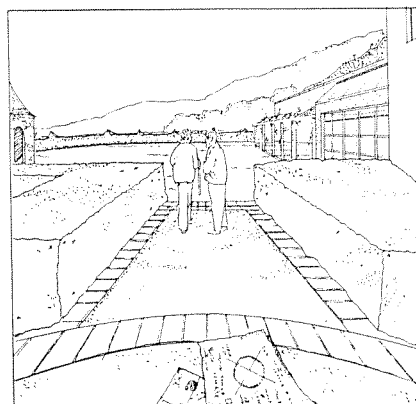
that they seem to undercut the exhibition's contention that these works are pointing the way toward a transformation of the American garden.

The same staleness haunts Martha Schwartz's "New York City Bulb Garden," which draws on Conceptualist precedents for a proposal to plant a roof-garden flower bed with seasonally sequential configurations of bulbs spelling out "IGNORANCE," "EVIL," "MONEY," "BLISS." (Whatever happen to "LOVE"?) Lee Weintraub and John di Domenico, arguing that athletes function as gods within our society, propose a Post-modernist/Pop shrine for the high priest Magic in which a neon basketball supported by a monumental hand looms over a Grecian temple complex on a pastoral site in upstate New York. A futurist echo sounds in Pamela Burton's and Katherine Spitz's "Hydrotopia," a retreat above Malibu designed for scientists, theologians, and convicts who represent, respectively, the empirical, spiritual and irrational aspects of the human psyche. The convicts are there, it turns out, to do the gardening. By contrast, Julie Messervy and Peter Droegge invoke the grim actualities of the present in their "peace" garden for an urban site over an underground subway and shopping mall. They have

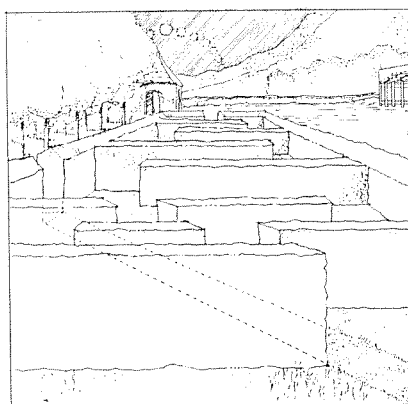
plotted a symbolic passage for visitors through a tunnel leading to a 50-foot-high, partially sunken cone, the interior walls of which glimmer with gas-fed flames meant to represent the “inferno” of nuclear disaster. Their question, “Is this what it will be like?” trivializes, in its startling naiveté, the power of their work’s good intentions.

Not surprisingly, given the temper of the moment, most of these gardens depend on a vocabulary of Renaissance and Baroque classicism, preferably complemented by a surrounding landscape of exceptional natural beauty. Exploiting these inherited forms, Vincent Healy wants to intensify, even using new technologies, the experience of sensuous physicality that such gardens afford, suggesting that they might serve therapeutic purposes in healthcare. Van Valkenburgh manipulates the formal vocabulary more inventively for his “Eudoxia,” which offers the most genuinely innovative idea in the entire exhibition, that the garden might serve instead of courtyard or plaza as prototype for the landscape development of urban sites by large corporations. He imagines a garden between office towers in which hedges, lawn, flowers, and furniture create an environment not traditionally associated with the city. Terence Harkness’s work, too, is a refreshing exception

to the shallow pretentiousness of some of the other projects. His workmanlike landscape for a midwestern prairie farm residence combines sensitivity to regional forms, both natural and man-made, with an imaginative reordering of familiar elements that makes them more vivid and delightful. Harkness has aimed to interpret certain “profound” qualities of the east central Illinois landscape—its extreme flatness and openness, “visual tensions” between growth and aging, ripe and spent. Smithson would have appreciated those values; they hint at directions that could rescue us from the moribund conventions of the contemporary garden.



The meeting of Art and Science



The Maze

Drawings

from Pamela Burton and Katherine Spitz panels

The meditation garden of the past holds answers for developing therapeutic gardens in the future. By producing gardens as settings for the practice of behavioral medicine, we expand on the garden's function in healthcare facilities and nursing homes. Our better understanding of meditation garden traditions will add to the role of the public and private garden as a form of preventative medicine.

The Garden and the Senses

Practitioners of behavioral medicine—which includes relaxation therapy and chronic pain control—will often persuade their patients to focus on two or more of their senses with equal intensity as a means of treatment. As each of us has unique perceptual strengths and weaknesses (some of us are more aware of visual stimulus; others auditory, and so on) the garden, a place which can be designed to reach all of the senses, is an excellent setting for this kind of therapy.

My garden proposal contains elements that aim at more than one of our senses at a time, and with considerable intensity:

Artificial pond:
stocked with bullfrogs
and tree frogs for eve-

ning sounds and
planted with waterlilies
offering year-round
color and fragrance

Surrounding area:
crickets and berry
bushes attractive to
songbirds bring rural
sounds into urban
setting

Garden pavilion:
temperature control
from radiant heating
and bombarded with
negative air ions
interior surfaces
proportioned and tiled
for maximum sound
reverberation

aeolian harps in trees
flanking the pavilion
introduce sound of
wind into room

daylight bouncing
off ripples in reflection
pool adds movement to
prismatic lightbeams
at night, floodlights
in trees beam off water
rather than off glazing,
creating kinetic night
lighting and turning
pavilion into a lantern/
kaleidoscope

black, glass-topped,
sunken banquet table
reflects and deflects
sounds and prismatic
light from windows

fragrance of incense
corresponds to taste
of food eaten in room

smoke gives three-
dimensional emphasis
to colored light beams
wind chimes in trees
tuned to correspond
in quality to moving
prismatic light

Fountain:
radiant heating in pave-

ment surrounding fountain creates warm microclimate at night
fountain's splashing jets emphasize optical tension in tile pattern
pulsing rhythms of the water jet are synchronized with the repetitive tile pattern, creating a mesmerizing effect

high water jet underlit as major focal point in evening

heated, steaming water diffuses light at night and warms immediate area

perfumed water lends fragrance to fountain's surroundings

Garden approach and entry:

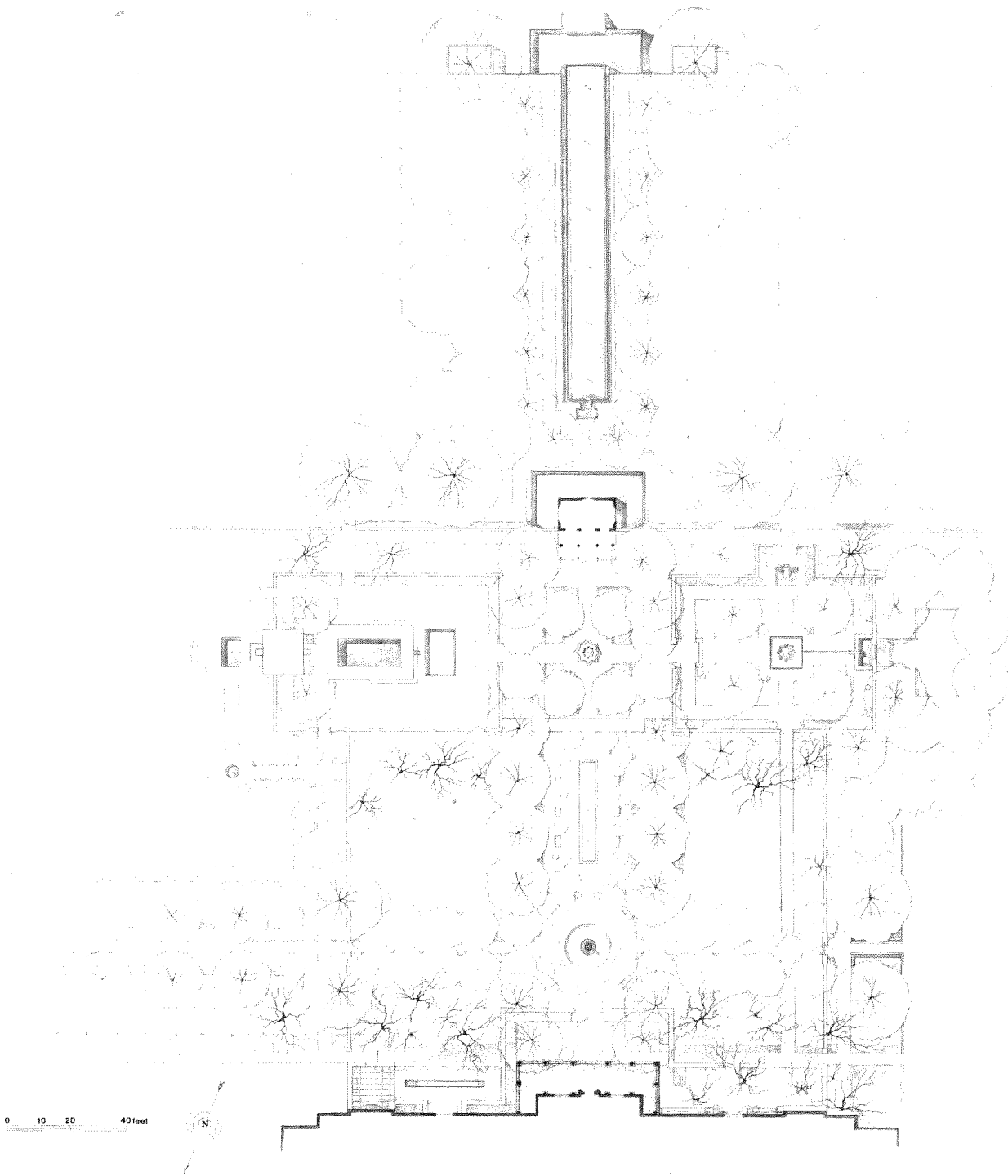
Lombardy poplars in flanking rows along the entry path flicker and rustle during warm months

Cassia multijuga seed pods sound like "whispering castanets"

in winter, stands of dombeya are in full, fragrant bloom and show through the two rows of leafless poplars and multijuga along the path

shrubs and ground cover flanking entry path produce a year-round sequence of fragrance especially attractive to hummingbirds and butterflies

whistling acacia with wind chimes and creaking, groaning culms of timber bamboo add drama to garden entry during winter storms and Santa Ana winds



Randolph T. Hester, Jr.

I am supposed to argue that gallery garden design is frivolous, even immoral, because in recent debates about the direction of landscape architecture I have cast my lot *with* participatory processes, environmental justice, and land stewardship and *against* surface art for its own sake, aesthetic monopolies, and the design fiduciaries of forces that profit from oppression of people and place.

But in fairness I cannot do that because I have not actually witnessed these garden designs in the gallery. I have only seen the catalogue. Since I have long used garden catalogues, I was favorably predisposed when I received this one.

The forms speak of painful attempts to break the modernist stranglehold. The gardens wish to say something important. There is a rich experimentation that is refreshing, if often clumsy. There is original value in a sympathetic analysis of the Illinois landscape, original hue in a language of color. I like Warren Byrd's north arrow and Michael Van Valkenburgh's border of the irides. And imagine my pleasure to read that over half of the gardens resulted from participatory processes; seven of the designs were collaborative efforts.

Beautiful reproductions of presentation drawings of

landscape architecture are counterbalanced by the stunning art of Barbara Solomon. "2 Fields + 3 Houses = A Landscape" is provocative yet pleasingly engaging (its grace and elegance pulls you in before it makes you think); it is witty (the site is five 12-by-9-inch pieces of paper); and it dramatically demonstrates the tension between architectural aesthetics and landscape aesthetics (it makes one try to reconcile the work of Odilon Redon, Harold Osborne, and George Santayana all at once). This is the visual highlight of the catalogue.

The catalogue as a whole resembles a Dearborn punt, pass, and kick contest. Generally, the text is richer, more engaging than the images. In many cases, what is said about the garden doesn't jive with the images. Superficial thinking is beautifully drawn. Compelling ideas about external questions are poorly communicated. As a result, none of the psychic power intended is evoked.

In exception, Steven Krog's cemetery model does communicate. I project myself into it; going somewhere? is how I feel, precisely the emotional response he hints he wants. Seek the soul, express it beautifully, communicate it clearly. Evoking subtle and meaningful feelings and thoughts through garden design, as Krog does here, is

a valuable art. He avoids the oft-evil of superficial beauty. His garden recalls some lines by Moshe Safdie:

He who seeks truth shall find beauty
He who seeks beauty shall find vanity
He who seeks order shall find gratification
He who considers himself the servant of his fellow beings shall find the joy of self-expression
He who seeks self-expression shall fall into the pit of arrogance
Arrogance is incompatible with nature
Through nature, the nature of the universe and the nature of man, we shall seek truth
If we seek truth, we shall find beauty¹

The flexibility of Martha Schwartz's minimalist flower messages is similarly worthy garden design. The user can express herself/himself with any message, given the right season! Such a simple participatory empowerment is more therapeutic than the uncontrolled stimuli of the garden as a healing place.

Superficial pretenders, however, destroy the philosophical and political credibility of good gallery garden designs. Instead of art, they produce self-promotional imaginings and consumptive designer design, which are antithetical to both art and land stewardship. Mother nature as a covergirl makes fashionable cocktail chatter.

Environmental anomie is reinforced. The enemy of landscape art is not an uninitiated public but mediocre landscape artists.

There are other dangers in gallery landscape architecture, particularly if it intends to develop a theoretical context for landscape design, as this exhibition claims to do. It perpetuates the dominance of landscape architectural art by two-dimensional art theory, which Hepburn, Zube, and others have shown to be inappropriate. Two-dimensional art theory is wrongheaded for the landscape. It ignores the unique dimensions of landscape aesthetics: living, changing, sequential, encompassing, multisensory, forcing participation.

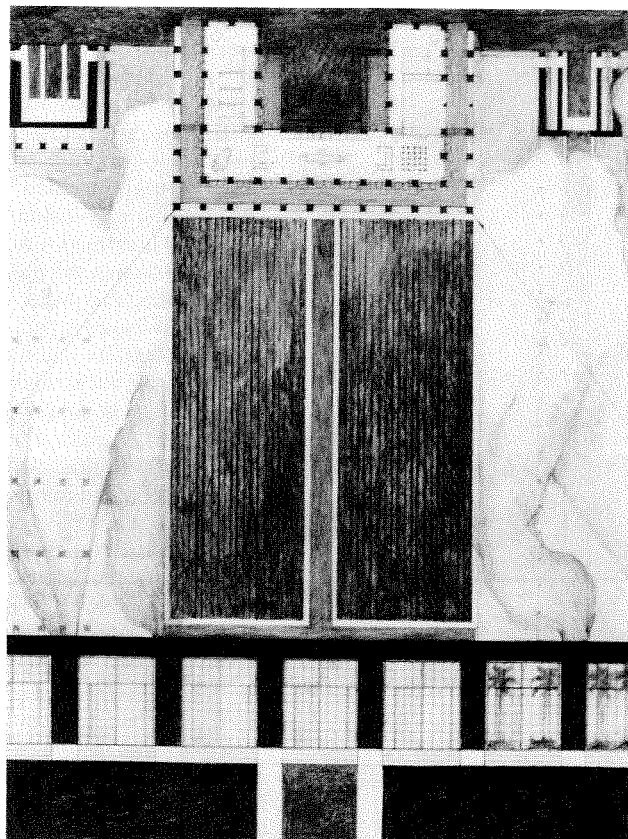
Similarly, obscure symbolism poorly translated isolates garden designers from their audience. Gardening is the most cherished and most popular pastime of American adults. As such, it poses extraordinary possibilities for designers to communicate vital messages. Why waste the opportunity with unmeaningful allegories? Does a garden deriving planted forms from Jekyll and Lutyens guarantee a better result than my Aunt Annie Helen's, whose garden derived from her Great Aunt Katherine Sue, the *Progressive Farmer*, and her need to create? No. Aunt Annie Helen's polka dot landscape represents ideas

from dozens of books and three generations of life, war, and death. That garden says something profound, yet she is still open to new ideas. She discovers emotions and creates messages in the landscape, but she knows bullshit when she sees it.

Self-discovery through visual metaphors doesn't require a garden designer who draws in tongues. All one needs is a pair of eyes, a landscape, and a hoe. Some people in the rural area where my Aunt Annie Helen lives even appreciate the beauty of the landscape and its complex symbolism without a college degree.

There is a sign over the inside of my aunt's garden gate. It says a garden is nothing without skill, love, struggle, and good dirt. The words love and struggle are crudely handwritten; skill and good dirt are letraset-quality painted. Understanding and appreciative, almost every departing neighbor nods to the sign.

¹From the book *Form and Purpose: Is the Emperor Naked?* from the International Design Education Foundations, Aspen, CO, 1980, page 139.



Partial Plan

Barbara Stauffacher Solomon

12 Brillog and Contrary Gardens

Laurie Olin

In the architectural design circles gardens are “back.” Of course, they never were out for many gardeners, horticulturalists, and generally civilized people of many callings, but for a considerable proportion of landscape architects and architects during the past two decades, they were considered too personal or private in content and too small in scale for serious consideration in academia or practice. As with all generalizations, this one has its exceptions and does not take into account designers as different from each other as Garrett Eckbo and Russell Page. It does, however, reflect the dominant mood and practice of the field of landscape architecture in the recent past. Large-scale land planning, corporate, institutional, and public work, for which most of those practitioners now in their forties and fifties were trained, preoccupied a generation frequently troubled and criticized for their lack of depth regarding plants and fine-grained, sophisticated detailing or, worse, more recently for being concerned with the lack of “art” and ideas in landscape design. The change in taste that accompanies postmodernism and the formalism and symmetry and the architectural elements of the landscape as well as a renewed interest in color, color theory, and horticultural manipula-

tion such as topiary and pleaching that one finds in the studios of our nation’s design schools and professional journals today certainly would have astonished and appalled the basic design and history teachers of the 1950s. This, too, will pass, and as this exhibition may indicate, we are already moving into a new and as yet not clearly understood period that will have its own “look” and “feel” in a few years’ time.

The changes taking place in design sensibility and the interests evoked by this particular group of designers exemplify some of the emerging sources of form and imagery. Careful study of the work itself will reveal more about the nature of this change than anything I can say or probably than the designers themselves have said. In fact, this particular selection of writings attests to the fact that landscape designers can write as badly and with as much pretension and purple prose as any of the architects currently in print. The work is much more interesting and in nice ways problematical. Here we can see for ourselves that the change taking place is more than one of looks or a mere craving for novelty or newness. The kernel of truth in the statement that the garden is to landscape architecture as the house is to architecture lies in the extent to which it represents the making of a small world

that embodies attitudes toward self, community, and the world not of our making that encompasses us. At their best, gardens have turned out to be among the greatest artistic creations of each society through history.

Particular creations come to mind as exemplars of entire civilizations and their world view, such as the villa gardens of Katsura or Lante. It would be foolish and unfair to compare what are essentially *esquisses*, or sketch problems, gathered in this exhibition to such ambitious and fully developed constructions, but in their repeated references to earlier masterpieces or to openly metaphysical notions, it is hard not to, and it is hard not to be critical in the comparison. It is the interest in the garden as a rejuvenated vehicle for formal exploration that demands our attention. Part of this appeal historically has been that one is constrained less in cost and in formal-functional issues than in the architecture of most buildings, and seemingly freed to express personal tastes in the design of small or modestly scaled gardens. Another aspect of the appeal of garden design at this particular moment is the widespread dissatisfaction with so much that has been built in the last forty years, which despite its technical and functional merits has often been aesthetically and sensuously barren. Gardens

by their very nature are primarily concerned with aesthetics and sensory stimulation.

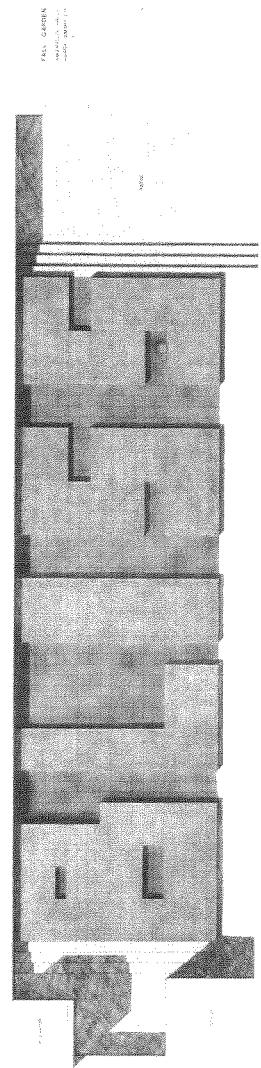
To many of us in the field, it is particularly puzzling that a nation as energetic and pluralistic, or culturally effervescent to the point of near chaos in much of our urban realm, has produced so little diversity or high quality in landscape design since World War II. Architecture has hardly fared better; it only seems so because of the larger number of people in the field and total number of works commissioned and published. Many of us expected regional styles to emerge as a result of the imperatives of geology, climate, soil, plants, and the diversity engendered by ethnicity and population shifts. So far very little has happened to support this view. Why? Surely not the “dead hand” of the past our teachers warned us against, for reexamination of the past is a central tenant of the new practitioners and students. In fact, at the heart of the few strongest regionalist movements in the country today lies a deep concern for local history. A large part of the homogeneity and banality can possibly be laid at the doorstep of the schools with their dogmas and habits perpetuated by a too small cadre of self-reinforcing, long-lived teachers who have been encouraged by the profession to “train” workers

for jobs. The mavericks and exceptions to this rule stand out in both their personal manner and the quality and differences in their work: Halprin, Kiley, McHarg, Sasaki, Church, Eckbo, Royston, Haag. With the exception of McHarg, who is known for his contribution to large-scale land planning methodology but who personally has ceaselessly toiled in the marvelous series of riotous gardens at his several residences, all of these individuals who form the central core of postwar design innovation in the United States and who have been aped and emulated endlessly (and terribly) by others have spent considerable time in their formative years in practice designing residential gardens. Many have gone on to do enormous and extraordinary, highly influential work of other sorts, but in each case these are rooted in the exploration of ideas in their early gardens.

It is to be expected, therefore, when a new generation declares itself and wishes to strike out in new directions that one of its vehicles will be the garden. It is, however, a bit disappointing that the work resulting from the current show isn’t more adventurous, fresh, or gutsy. There really does seem to be genuine and timeless truth in the *mot* of Francis Bacon. Society does learn to build buildings with sophistication sooner and with more ease

than it does to produce gardens or landscape of like nobility. This probably has as much to do with the development of attitudes toward life, the earth, and the engagement of living materials that possess a fulsomeness of their own already as a medium of one’s own art and design as it does with anything else. In landscape architecture, there is no such thing as a hypothetical site. All sites are real and particular. Each and every one already is a “place” before one begins to engage in the process of design for some cultural purpose. The degree to which normal, banal, and poor sites are transformed to become memorable, beautiful, and unique or are invested with memories, values, and dreams that can be shared by others is the means by which we measure success in their design. Using this criteria, it is unfortunate that several of these projects are not in fact under construction, because they would contribute a modest but genuine addition to the collective body of garden design that frames our state of mind. Warren Byrd’s poetic tidewater garden should exist in a form other than these drawings.

The fractured nervousness or thin and anemic quality of some of the schemes—even while possessing ideas and elements that are valid and praiseworthy in themselves—expresses as clearly, or better



Plan
Martha Schwartz

than lengthy essays could, the mood of the moment regarding the physical and natural world that is held by many. I find the opposing views toward voluptuousness revealed in these twelve works to be one of the most interesting and obvious issues to be raised by them. Most of the designers have eschewed strategies of minimalism and the aesthetics, geometrics, surfaces, and structure so common to a great proportion of midcentury art and architecture. Healey's garden of smells, sounds, and tactile stimulus, Solomon's plunge into lavender, Sullivan's overstuffed larder of shapes, forms and volumes, Falcón's and Buenos's brash and dazzling color markedly contrast with Krog's, Messervy's, and Schwartz's tough control and self-restraint, which opens the way into an equally strong, highly emotional expressionism, one as notable for its abnegation as for its offerings.

If, as I have implied earlier, for too long there has been insufficient diversity, discourse, and debate in the field of landscape architecture concerning design expressions and theory, then one must welcome, as I do, an exhibition such as this that presents some of the elements necessary for such discourse and debate. If sensory stimulation is an issue addressed openly in many of these schemes, so,

too, there is a nascent regional expression in this work, and not of a folksy vernacular sort but a more sophisticated cultural and biophysical one. Consider Harkness trying to draw an aesthetic out of the prairie farmstead, Falcón's and Buenos's Latin topicality versus Byrd's eastern shore construct with its echoes of colonial and enlightenment dreams, or Schwartz's streetwise rooftop gesture, with its sassy and changeable economy of means. This all bodes well for the field.

There are, in my view, three weaknesses in the works exhibited that should not pass unnoticed. One is the underlying premise that flowers be used somehow as the vehicle for an exploration of new possibilities in garden design. The second is the misuse or misunderstanding of the relationship between drawing and design, or for that matter what most of us conventionally understand as physical reality. The third is an attempt to appropriate compositional strategies currently fashionable in architecture. First, who doesn't like flowers, or at least some particular ones, and what can one do with them that hasn't already been done yet by generations of gardeners and designers? That's a tough one. Flowering plants (angiosperms) comprise most of what we usually think of as the vegetation of the world, certainly of the gardener's palette (excluding, of course,

algae, mosses, ferns, cycads, and conifers); grasses, palms, cacti, and most shrubs and trees flower as well as the smaller "herbaceous" flowers of the garden. At the moment I write this, a red maple is in spectacular bloom outside the window, glowing with a cloud of tiny coral blossoms; the elms nearby are dipped in a soft pale fuzz of petals. Because of their scale and texture, as well as the seasonal dynamics of visible form (and its absence), flowers are one of the best examples of the recurrent cycles of life, of the seasons resulting from planetary movement. On the other hand, despite memorable lilac walks, wisteria arbors, laburnum allées, and the vast broderies of European baroque gardens, most herbaceous flowers, or the others for that matter, are not generally suited to the creation of three-dimensional spatial structures but to two-dimensional patterns of color or texture. In one way or another, the creators of the most successful designs here largely ignore flowers in the formulation of the underlying spatial structure of their schemes. This is probably because of their implicit understanding that the fundamental difference between designing a garden or landscape and the activity of gardening or horticulture is that of creating spatial arrangements and structures.

The second problem is one also easily dealt with: representation versus that

which is represented. Drawings are inherently abstract, even when striving for verisimilitude. Several of these schemes profit from their graphic representation and several suffer terribly. Barbara Stauffacher Solomon's drawings by now are something of a small cult item, and museums have begun collecting them. What is represented, however, is rarely that remarkable, but she focuses our attention on aspects of things that give one a desire to see them. For several years I have had a growing desire to see if she can translate any of this into something physical that is as good as the source of its inspiration and all of its forms, Mediterranean agriculture and renaissance gardens. Of the schemes that suffer, the worst are those of Burton, Harkness, and Van Valkenburgh, which present strong visceral or even cerebral ideas about physicality in the most vapid, precious, or anemic drawings. It is hard not to dislike a project like Van Valkenburgh's, which claims to be about life, color, texture, and bustle, but is presented in a vacant white model and parboiled drawings. Burton's scheme may be feverish and Jungian in its imagined combination of criminals and scientists, brambles, caves, and water oozing on walls, but it is weak and sickly in its graphic evocation. We never really believe in it, but we could have with more effort and understanding of the

physicality of her ideas and their representation. Krog, as usual, presents a genuinely interesting scheme, but with extraneous accompanying art/talk chitchat that doesn't advance his case at all. Like Yeats and his beliefs in Rosicrucianism, we are not interested or compelled by the things that get him going, but in the results. I am not entranced by a bronze cube as a representation of a clipped chestnut. I accept it because it is an interesting model that relates to the ideas of a limited palette. For that matter, wood, cork, plastic, cardboard, styrofoam, and dillweed would not do a better job it seems. One of the dilemmas of the field since antiquity has been the difficulty of depicting phenomena that are various, multiple, spatial, and unlike objects such as buildings, which rarely can be seen from an external position and which generally engulf or surround us in ways far more diffuse and extensive than do buildings. Even in a small garden, such as many of these are, the plan and section tell us as much as a multiplicity of views or a model, and yet it is the views that correlate more directly with experience, despite their fragmentary limitations.

Finally, a word about borrowing too directly from contemporary architectural practice. It would be foolish for me to attempt an analysis of architectural design

composition and its theory in the twentieth century, but there are several noticeable characteristics that are relevant to this exhibition. Borrowing from early twentieth-century avant-garde painting, architects have heavily exploited three compositional strategies: collage (and its corollary, fragmentation), displacement and deformation, as exemplified in surrealism, and asymmetry, especially as practiced in de Stijl and constructivist works. Regardless of the motive, the result of the first two have been to assault objects, breaking them down, often into a new field or series of new and transformed objects. In effect this has frequently led from a space-occupying phenomenon to that of a space creating one, such as a head or a building transformed into a landscape. The difficulty of performing such operations upon that which is already spatially extensive and nonobjective can best be seen in the work of Gabriel Guvrekian or Mallet-Stevens. Ironically, when one systematically inverts the relationships between the parts of a landscape with the same logic as Picasso, it leads to an implosion and the objectification of that landscape, finally producing bizarre results, such as those of Guvrekian's garden of light. As Church, Eckbo, Burle-Marx, and Kiley have demonstrated so clearly in their work, certain spatial

reconfigurations were easy to accommodate, especially those of the "dynamic asymmetry" sort, producing fresh and energetic compositions. Today the de Stijl patterns of Kiley's Miller house and the surrealist pool and sculpture of the Donnell garden seem timeless classics with the authority of earlier styles and cultures. More problematic are current attempts to incorporate the fracturing and superimposition of fragments appropriated from popular culture, archaeology, and the catalogue of design history so prevalent in building design. These strategies have moved buildings toward the achievement of properties associated with successful and highly evolved landscapes. Beyond making caricatures or burlesques of themselves, in what ways will such strategies advance the design of landscapes? As we have recently seen in the work of Hargreaves, who has appropriated nearly every one of these strategies—surrealist dislocation, fragmentation and displacement, asymmetries, color patterning, etc.—a postmodern landscape such as these studies suggest is buildable and worth doing. Whether it will be lovable or lasting is another issue and in many cases not an appropriate question.

The show succeeds largely to the degree that it raises so many good and bothersome

questions, that it stimulates one to dissatisfaction, with both what is the general state of the art and much of what is proposed here as an antidote.

Caring about Places: Gardens

Gardens hold a special place in American culture. They are more likely than baseball to be the genuine national pastime. Probably everyone's life has been touched at some point by a garden: a grandmother's garden (the first one I remember), a rose garden, a vegetable garden, a public garden, or even a prolific window box.

We are told, (and are inclined to believe), though, that garden design is at a low ebb, that it needs rejuvenation through more professional attention and public recognition. Why might this be so?

One answer may lie in the confusion between the act of gardening and the making of a garden. Gardening, however satisfying it may be, does not of itself create distinctive gardens, any more than practicing the piano leads directly to concert performances. Pride of authorship, combined with the intimacy that results from constant nurturing care, goes a long way toward ensuring that a garden will please its maker, but that is not enough to ensure excellence of design. Conversely, paper is not dirt, and the care (however much) emplaced on it cannot yield living results. Excellence in garden design, as elsewhere, involves the coincidence of broad understanding and obsessive personal attention.

There are also troubling questions of patronage. For whom are gardens made and by whom? In the early part of this century, the English magazine *Country Life* could

comfortably maintain that "no one has ever been found to doubt that [gardens] should possess a definite relation to the houses they adorn." Their illustrations tended toward sweeping terraces and rose pergolas hundreds of feet long, interspersed with topiary and statues. Cast figures entitled "kneeling slave" appeared in their publications with appalling regularity—precursors of the nasty, offensively colored figures still found on some suburban lawns. Presumably their readers would have had little trouble with the suggestion made by one of our contributors in this issue that the proposed garden would be inhabited by scientists, theologians, and convicts, with the last (convicted of we know not what) performing maintenance.

The grand gardens of the past depended, clearly, on command of great resources and on a leisure class sufficiently dedicated to their perception. They were, at first, private affairs, even when they embodied the state.

There have been, of late, few patrons for gardens of such scope. And when they have appeared (usually in corporate guise), scope has tended to take the form of sweeping naturalized scenes rather than anything that would speak in terms of confinement and intensive observation. "Of course," you will say, "who can imagine paying for the amount of attention required to maintain an intricately designed garden?" We should. The time has come, I would venture, for

communities to create places that incorporate splendid understandings of both the natural forces and the cultural patterns we live amongst. Gardens can become popular emblems of our determination to care about the world.

How will the body politic ever come to such an unexpected conclusion? Only by being shown. The exhibition reported on and debated in this issue is an attempt to focus attention on the garden as a subject for design. The National Country Garden, also reported on, is an attempt to encourage people to garden with imagination, even in the most limited of circumstances. Though both are directed more to private than public situations, they each show ways that the professions can bring possibilities to public attention. The issues they raise and the suggestions they bring forward deserve continuing vigorous attention. So, indeed, does a good rose.



Donlyn Lyndon

Marc Treib

On the Exhibition

"Transforming the American Garden" intended to question existing norms and give designers a freer range in which to create than what is provided in current professional practice. To remove the major constraints of climate and site from landscape design, however, produces serious consequences. Ideas that can exist on paper are necessarily different from those occupying real space. On paper one may possess limitless land, a perfect climate, no erosion, and a realm in which every plant grows to a perfectly clipped outline.

The removal of the projects from the world of real plants and dirt hardly grants by fiat artistic viability to the works involved. I would think that many of these paper designs are no more artistic, and perhaps a lot less meaningful and enjoyable, than the derided "crafted" garden mentioned in the introduction. There is, in fact, a rather perceptible narcissistic tone to much of the work, one of the exhibition's most disturbing aspects. That tone has been common in architectural circles for over a decade but is new to landscape architecture; and I'm not quite sure that it represents a positive "transformation."

As an educator, I am somewhat troubled by this as an approach to *design*. The

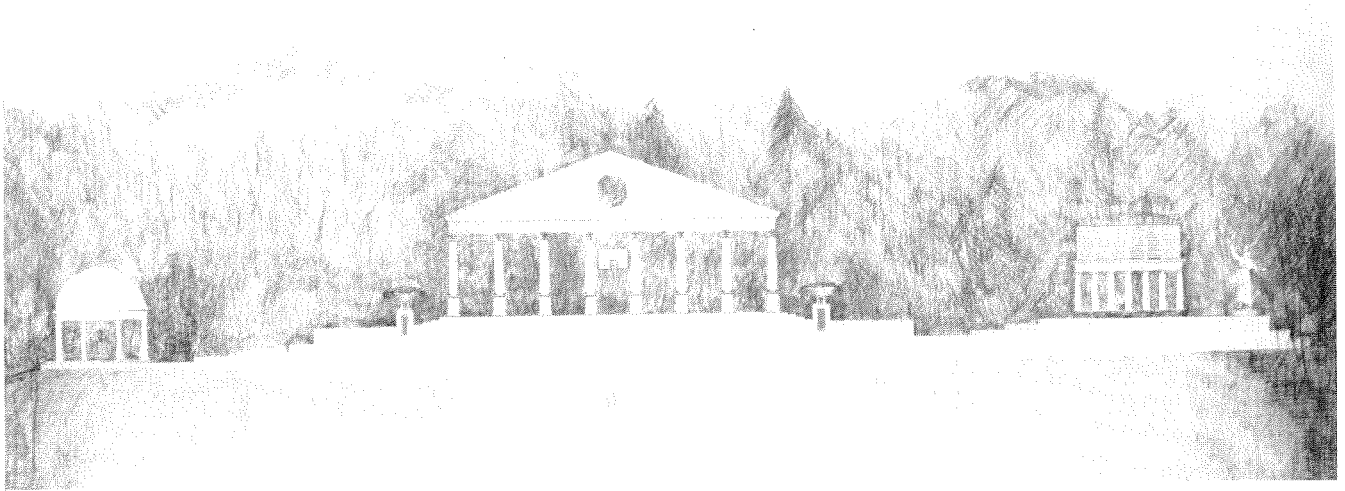
existence of external parameters is perhaps the greatest single factor distinguishing the instigation of art from that of design. In making art, the parameters usually rest with the individual, though they are constrained by such factors as the limits of the medium or the nature of one's assistance. Design, on the other hand, is commonly conceived in response to conditions external to the designer. Only in commissioned art do the sets of these programmatic and technological parameters overlap.

Three orders of ideas concern us in design. The first, and to my mind the highest, is the expression of a philosophical position greater than the immediate project at hand. It may be religious, it may be didactic, but the idea must imbue the design with a significance beyond that of immediate sensory experience. The second order concerns the handling of the medium: in building, architectonic ideas such as the use of the grid, metric order, or numerical relationships. In landscapes, the design idea might be manifest in the skilled use of plant materials, water, or spatial composition. Lesser landscapes substitute this second order for the primary one; that is, the organization of content is confused with the content itself. The third level of ideas is the pragmatic or detailed, which must be taken to include not only the

accommodation of functional and physical needs but those psychological issues the design must address.

Of course, the categories are not rigid. For example, one can explore the possibilities of using the ideas behind the second order as a means of telling us about our world. In landscape architecture, this would appear to be a far more obvious approach than in architecture, since the former discipline deals more directly with living systems. Is there not some way that the design of the garden could tell us about nature and thus life? Could not the phenomenon of the garden—life in a microcosm—provide us with a detailed view into our quotidian existence?

Certain of the exhibition's projects addressed design beyond the superficiality of the pretty graphic subject. Julie Moir Messervy and Peter Friederich Droege sought to create a place that reminded us of human frailty and our responsibility to acknowledge the everpresent threat of nuclear annihilation. Admittedly that is a large burden for a garden to carry, and unfortunately their design as drawn conveyed little of the power of their verbal statement, but their intention was substantive. Michael Van Valkenburgh's "Eudoxia," on the other hand, borrows its starting point from literature, which may be both a shaky notion and a slim thread on which to hang significance. The



formal skill with which the design is executed, on the other hand, is admirable, though one wonders about the exact shaping of the vegetation that more closely resembles inert rather than growing material.

Water, which informs the “Hydrotopia” project by Pamela Burton and Katherine Spitz, is an obvious element for investigation in the garden. The orchestration of the individual conditions in the design, however, is difficult to discern in the graphic materials that accompany the description. Terence Harkness’s “An East Central Illinois Garden” is refreshing in its humility and all but loses its identity in the cultivated fields that surround it. Perhaps this was his intention: to show us that all that grows is a garden, though this intention is not clear in the catalogue.

Of the twelve projects, my eye returned most often to Warren T. Byrd’s “Tidal Garden: Eastern Shore of Virginia.” Byrd, like many of the design teams, rooted his designs in a specific site, as if a paper site could support no life. And as the introduction notes, most of these sites were proximate and familiar

to the landscape architects involved, landscapes in which they had worked before. The tidal garden is made and unmade by gravity and the pulsing of the ocean. Its excessive formality at first is offputting, and it is easy to question the appropriateness of such a rigidly ordered scheme to convey the existence of natural phenomena. But the accompanying sketches and text suggest a lighter touch within the rigid geometric configuration. More engaging is the contrast of the sheet of water against the bank at high tide with the residual meanders of water in remission at the ebb. The effect tells us about our position in the world, the passing of time, and the effects of natural phenomena on our lives, all within a genteel and elegant—if strictly formal—garden setting.

Ultimately we must ask whether the exhibition really provides us with hopes or models for “The New American Landscape.” Probably not. For one, we see a return to more classical ordering, probably in direct reaction to the mannered informality of the ecological school of design and the skewed fragmentation that characterizes certain re-

cent schools of postmodern architecture. Several of the designs, including Byrd’s, contradict Jory Johnson’s claim that “Americans are not beholden to the almost oppressive traditions of Europe,” which tested against these schemes is patently false. Ironically, the project that somewhat facetiously deals with the pop cult of basketball uses a classical temple for its primary structure. What we learn is that many American landscape architects are continuing the European tradition as if incapable of formulating their own myths.

The content of many designs is disturbing for both their restricted use of greater ideas and lack of acknowledgment of our truly American cultural landscapes. In sixteenth-century Japan, the tea masters engaged in “re-seeing” (that is, reconsidering or reforming) the simple rural world, elevating vernacular elements to an art form. Tea houses derive from farm structures, millstones could be used as pavers, and fragile bamboo could be as prized as a rare ceramic. Could we not look around us—and the Illinois and Virginia gardens have begun this search—at those

Temple

Lee Weintraub and John Di Domenico

landscapes in which we dwell to find sources for forms that can educate us not to an abstract notion of pure beauty but to an understanding of the lives we live?

Representation

Since an exhibition of this type is presented in words, drawings, and models, the question of the limits of representation underlies its evaluation. Drawings represent space and form, but they also illustrate and occupy space. Some gardens offer striking visual images with only tepid ideas of lukewarm experience behind them; there is a vast difference between graphic pattern and experienced spatial configuration. Others play with color or view to suggest the experience on site. On the whole, the drawings are more convincing as landscape representations than the models. Perhaps this is due to the fact that drawings have remained the primary tool of landscape analysis, unlike in architecture, where the drawing and the model have shared a nearly equal validity.

Graphic representations perform two functions. The first conveys the structure or idea of the design; the second, suggests the experience of that idea realized. The structure is the design's organizational system or configuration and has been traditionally communicated in drawings

such as plans, elevations, or axonometric projections. None of these drawing types, however, gives us a picture of the world as the human views it.

Perspective provides a useful tool for experiential representations, though it is far from the way even the eye in isolation actually sees. Large scale models and mockups are also used for this purpose.

All representation should perform both functions to some degree. A plan of a labyrinth, for example, rates very high on structure but suggests none of the closure or claustrophobia experienced in place. A perspective or photo taken in a pathway of the labyrinth provides us with a notion of that experience but almost nothing of the configuration. There is no good and bad, but there should be an understanding of drawing use and limits.

Of the experiential representations, the series of Illinois landscape studies provides us with the most complete insight to the variety of takes seen from a distance. Chip Sullivan's idealized garden, while curiously Persian for Florida, arranges sets of view fragments, like words in a jumbled sentence, to direct our reading of the information. His quasi-cartoon style, appropriate to his intentions as written, operate in the zone of experiential depiction, although there

is a distancing and an abstraction that prevents us from seeing them as actual places. In comparison, the soft perspective sketches of the Virginia tidal garden are more usual in their formality and selection of viewpoints.

In many instances the designer's verbal statements are far more intriguing than the designs or their graphics. This may be due to the limitations in reproduction techniques as well as representation. But words, particularly adjectives, are loaded (see the menus at the International House of Pancakes and their free use of hyperbolic adjectives) and conjure up emotional or intellectual reactions with which to bias or replace the ideas conveyed in the drawings. Much of our appreciation or criticism of Michael Van Valkenburgh's design, for example, derives from a testing of the Calvino text against the design, comparing the verbal to rendered mode. It formalizes the common sequence of trying to fit form to words, whether those of the designer or those of the program.

On Flowers

Why is this exhibition receiving so much attention: a large segment of this journal, a lavish catalogue, and a tour to numerous cities? The principal reason is that this is the first exhibition in quite some time to suggest that landscape architecture can be an

artistic and intellectual as well as a professional enterprise. As such, "Transforming the American Garden" is a period piece, and it probably would never have produced the stir it has were it not for the movements that immediately preceded it. The exhibition questions the restriction of landscape practice to craft; design that lacks an intellectual or poetic base; landscape design free of ideas; perpetuation of the status quo. What it offers in their place, however, is ultimately troublesome and troubling.

For some reason the flower was selected as the starting point for the designs, perhaps for its purity of subject. The authors of the program brief claim that the "fields and forests of flowering plants were the landscape until man transformed it." Considering the basic grandeur of the topography, the scale of the mountains, the sweep of the plains, and the size of the rivers, this statement seems far wide of the mark. Giant scale has been the most distinctive characteristic of American landscape, and in comparison the flower plays a minor role. Scale, on the other hand, is the property most difficult to create on a small plot of land and is even more difficult to draw.

Choosing the flower as the point of departure for the new American landscape at first seems like an improper tactic, but few of the

exhibitors actually examined the subject to any depth. One used the flower as a source of color, like a magic marker, while another used it principally as a background graphic device. I would be hard put to find a single garden in the lot that truly developed from the idea of a flower, its color, growth, or physical properties beyond the chromatic. In this sense these are hardly new flower landscapes.

If the poetic trope of synecdoche—the use of the part to stand for the whole—had been employed, the content might have been deeper. If one examined the flower as a microcosm or a universe, the projects might have borne greater significance to our daily lives. If the flower had been seen less as a means to paint or make patterns and more as a means to present audible, olfactory and visual properties of garden, the projects might have produced a greater impact on the way we see the landscape or how we might fashion it in accordance with our aspirations. That growth, cycles, and time, so endemic in the garden, played a major role in so few of the designs is puzzling.

This past Christmas, I received what I considered to be an unusual gift: an amaryllis bulb. Knowing nothing of this sort of thing, I had to solicit guidance on its care and feeding. First nothing; but after some

weeks a leaf shot out, then another, and then several. The stalk followed, climbed, and reached what seemed a rather awkward proportion when capped by its bulging bud. The bud became a bloom, and after some six weeks a glorious four-part, red-tinted flower unfurled. I had seen it in my kitchen, watched its growth day by day, and ultimately learned more about the flower—and possibly the garden—than I did from reading the catalogue and examining the designs it contained.

Removing the real site and plants from the arena of the designer is no guarantee that the landscape will become more aesthetically conceived. Instead of withdrawal from the world of reality, we need to delve into its origins. Watching the amaryllis unfold, I sensed, in a Japanese way, the phenomena of growth and life and was saddened that the plant diminished its own resources as it grew—a metaphor for the world, perhaps. If the intention of this exhibition had been to focus on the garden as a microcosm from which we might learn about the greater landscape, it would have been better founded; for from the basic unit we *can* learn to achieve a greater understanding of the whole.

Charles Moore and William Mitchell

When Francis Bacon wrote, in 1625, that “when Ages grow to Civility and Elegancie, Men come to Build Stately, sooner than to Garden Finely,” the Pilgrim fathers had been struggling for just four years with the wild and recalcitrant North American continent. The hardships and perils of the frontier (as well as its thrills and challenges) that were to shape the relationship of Americans to their gardens for the ensuing 350 years have pressed us seldom into full great gardens like those of Europe and of Asia and often into miniatures, extensions, fragments, and inversions of those works, suitable for a nation in motion.

It is curious but not really surprising that the American garden that bears the closest resemblance to the great European ones is Middleton Place, near Charleston, South Carolina, of 1670, which is also the first major American garden. The interment of the deceased provided the first major opportunity, much later on, for a landscaped area available to the public. Frederick Law Olmsted’s Mount Auburn Cemetery in Boston, which dates from 1831, should probably be regarded as the continent’s oldest landscaped public garden, although many major

private gardens (from Middleton Place on) and certainly many grassy public spaces of importance (Battery Park in New York City, the Boston Common, Jackson Square in New Orleans) antedate it by a century or more. For a brilliant half-century after Mount Auburn Cemetery opened, Olmsted and others created the grand gardens of democracy: public parks such as Central Park in New York, Fairmount Park in Philadelphia, the Fenway in Boston, college campuses such as Stanford University’s on the San Francisco peninsula, even garden subdivisions such as Roland Park in Baltimore. These new garden forms for public use sometimes contained ingenious new arrangements to serve large groups of people: Central Park is particularly remarkable for the manipulation of hills and tunnels that separated vehicular traffic (carriages then, automobiles since) from pedestrian and equestrian circulation.

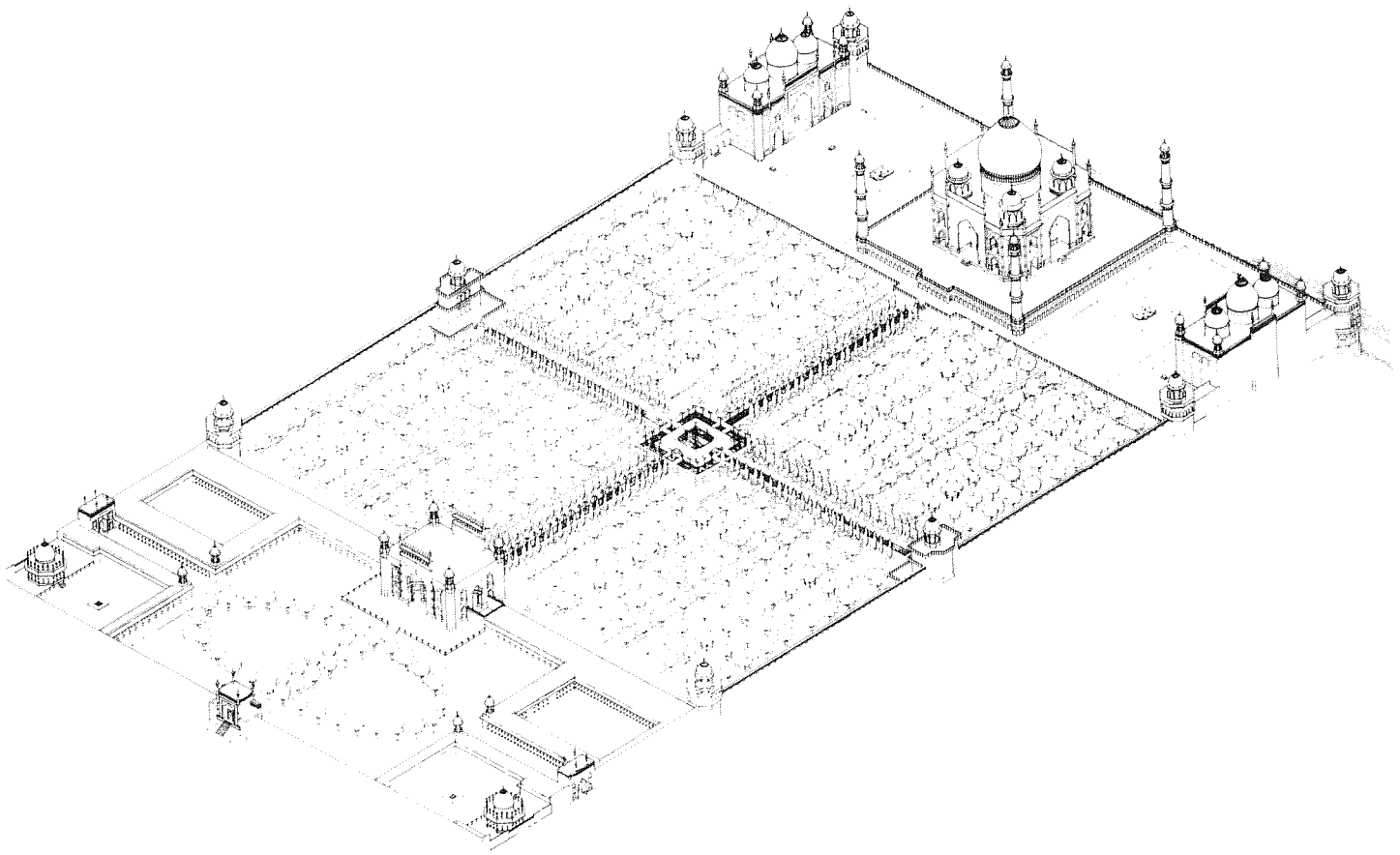
The citizens of cities that have mushroomed in the twentieth century have shown less inclination to invest their resources in public gardens. Perhaps it can be argued that the loose texture of the cities of the automobile age has allowed many citizens gardens of their own, so that the public green space lost many of its more intimate functions, although it did retain an important visual one, which small private gardens couldn’t do so well: it could recall the natural landscape, as the spreading cities rendered that more and more re-

mote. There are, though, some bargains available to bodies politic who just want their green space to look at. One of them, recognized since the landscaping of Mount Auburn Cemetery, is the burial ground, brought to an even greater semblance of park likeness by the removal of headstones, as at Forest Lawn near Los Angeles.

Mediterranean houses have always claimed some private turf by surrounding it with a building or a wall, and this tradition came directly from Spain to Mexico. In towns like Oaxaca, it creates a texture of continuous street facades, broken by half-observed glimpses into shaded family courts. When the courtyard came further north, in the California missions, it became a device for organizing many dwellings around a much larger communal space. Later, in California, there were bungalow courts on suburban lots patterned in the same way.

From almost the beginning, though, North America has bred an opposite tradition, which replaced walls with open spaces as a device for establishing a property. The settlers in eastern North America built no walls but left open space around their freestanding buildings; the larger the distance from the house to the street and to the sides and rear of its property, the more important the house. Public (but not commercial) structures were likely to be given more generous dimensions still, so that a court-house might sit in the center of

“American Edens” is a chapter from *The Poetics of Gardens*, by Charles Moore and William Mitchell, with drawings by William Turnbull, to be published by MIT Press in spring 1987.



a block, a “courthouse square,” surrounded, like the houses, by landscaping.

Here, around the courthouse and the houses, the purpose of the planting that was introduced became not to make an inhabitable garden but to adorn the house, even to camouflage it a little. From this derives the curious American institution of foundation planting, inserted to soften or even to mask the unsightly masonry foundation of the house. The combination of overzealous planting and uncontrolled growth has enveloped many a house in its bushes and given the institution a bad name, although the right combination of house and planting can produce, for instance, the rose-covered cottage that so delights us.

Sometimes the planting in front of or around the house is confined in a “planter,” which might even become a featured part of the design of the facade. The confinement it provides discourages the uncontrolled growth of the plants inside. However, it is unlikely that the plants inside will be able to grow big enough to have any part of providing an environment outdoors in the noble tradition of the gardens we have looked at, which are inhabitable by the human body, or by our minds, which let us imagine ourselves in the garden (like we can imagine ourselves in Ryoan-ji, although we never set foot in it).

The American custom, since firmly written into local law, decrees that the house be somewhere in the

The Taj Mahal

Drawing by William Turnbull Jr.

middle of its site, with the surrounding property divided into 1) an enclosed front yard, a foreground for the house, visible to the neighbors, with lawn, “accent” trees or shrubs, and foundation planting; 2) side yards, separating the house from its neighbors; and 3) a backyard, traditionally devoted to service and more recently to parking cars. This arrangement does not actively encourage the making of gardens.

Bigger Patterns

The orderly layout of the wilderness and the transformation of useless lands into useful ones are two recurrent American themes that have paralleled, and to some extent happened instead of, the ordering of the land in private and public gardens. In the century before the Pilgrim fathers, even the mighty Babur couldn't bring order and symmetry and running water to very much territory (his Ram Bagh encloses just a few acres of ground), but nineteenth- and twentieth-century Americans have done it by the thousands of square miles. Is it too fanciful to see the whole state of Indiana as a gigantic *bagh*, laid out on a recursive grid, varied only where collisions with natural landscape features mandated it? There is a grid of counties within which were gridded 36 square-mile townships, within which were 640 acre, mile-square sections, within which, finally, lay the basic 160-acre quarter-section farms. Nearby is the street grid of Chicago, with numbered streets running east-west into the lake, great avenues with

evocative names such as Prairie and Wabash running north-to-south for enormous distances, and the densely-packed rectangle of the Loop at the center, all broken open at the lake shore and the river. Far to the east is the two-way numbered grid of Manhattan, to the south is the symmetry of Savannah, and in the west rectangular city grids spread across valley floors until they bang into the surrounding mountains and wriggle up the slopes.

Babur had very little water to work with, so his wells, canals, *chadars*, and squares of irrigated land form a pattern that can be surveyed at a glance. In America the wells have become huge reservoirs, the canals have become aqueducts hundreds of miles long, the *chadars* have become awesome outflows (such as that at Boulder Dam), and the patches of irrigated land have become whole valleys so that the patterns of water can only be appreciated from a transcontinental jet. Sometimes there is symmetrical geometry still: large circles are overlaid, now, on the midwestern American grid, shaped by irrigating pipes that spin around water sources. They are the opposite of the contoured rice paddies that animate the hillsides of Asia in detailed and intimate response to the shape of the hills on which they lie very flat. The American circles, as long as the wheeled irrigation pipes can make their sweep about the central source, can go uphill and down, making a pattern quite independent of the contours and not even feeling the need to fill in the corners of the square fields left

brown and dry outside the circles of irrigation.

Even the mountains have become the base for patterns made by the big machines. In some of the rugged canyons in the hills behind Los Angeles, an extraordinary operation using huge earthmoving machines has sliced off the top of the steep hills to acquire dirt to mix with huge quantities of garbage to make a sanitary landfill that fills the canyons and supports on the spongy surface a golf course, dotted with pipes to vent the explosive methane that is brewing underneath. At the rim of the flat-topped new hills, the still solid earth supports a sinuous row of very expensive new condominiums, tight together on their sides and open at their fronts onto the golf course below in the valley. It is a brand new and highly profitable synthetic green landscape that bears almost no relationship in shape or color to the brown hills that were there before.

Faster Pilgrimages

An important inheritance from our national pioneering past is an interest not so much in arrival as in movement. Many of the most vivid images we shape are not of places but of routes, such as the Oregon Trail and the Santa Fe Trail, and events along the trail, such as the Cumberland Gap, the Mississippi River, or the Boston Post Road. Even the commercial strip of the very recent past stretches itself along the highway with little attention to place or arrival.

The emphasis on movement instead of settling down diminishes, of course, the ease with which we can inhabit our outdoor spaces. The difficulty is compounded by the size of the spaces: many American places seem too big (like the Grand Canyon) to encourage a sense of comfortable belonging.

The class of American gardens that comes closest to matching our continent's natural wonders is the garden for the automobile: the parkway or the scenic highway. In the successful ones, woods and meadows and copses and hedge-rows and swamps and lakes, even the occasional great tree, are big enough to be seen from the window of a speeding automobile and are arranged to make a coherent event of the automobile's pilgrimage through them. The Northway out of Albany, New York, has won prizes for its beauty. The Taconic Parkway in New York, in gentler territory, is renowned as well, as are the Blue Ridge Parkway in Virginia and the Merritt Parkway in Connecticut. Among scores of other remarkable examples is the scenic highway in the Black Hills of South Dakota, which bores through a range of hills for repeated tunnel vistas of the four huge American presidential stone faces on Mount Rushmore, especially dramatic when they are lighted at night.

Freeway interchanges are among our most impressive national monuments. There is a four-level interchange just north of downtown Los Angeles that has become over the last few decades, as its vines

and trees have grown, a high-speed subtropical paradise. Theme parks, such as Disneyland, consist not of places but of rides: horizontal, vertical, circular, and over "ascents and declivities" that certainly would have startled Edmund Burke. Airports are among our largest and certainly most heavily frequented public buildings—starting points for pilgrimages that arrange the scenery of a continent into a square of a few hours (with movies interspersed, not tales, as in Chaucer's day). But the high-speed pilgrimage that now captures the imagination more than any other, surely, is that of the space shuttle—beginning with fire in Florida, around the world in minutes, with oceans and continents wheeling beneath, to arrival at a desolate lake bed in the desert.

Newer Collections

Variety in the landscape (like the uniqueness of Yosemite or the Grand Canyon) is a highly prized American virtue. Southern California, especially, is known for its dazzling variety of very different landscape elements jostling one another. In the days before air travel made it commonplace, high drama was seen in the opportunity to take a cog railway up to a snowy mountaintop in the morning, to picnic at noon in an orange grove, then to spend the afternoon at the beach. Roses and flowering vines of prodigious dimensions flourished. The movie industry located there, it is said, for the rich palette of backgrounds, used only by a few but visible to many as a richly varied landscape. Many refugees

from midwestern winters moved there, too.

Visitors to California from wintry states have always been astonished by luxuriant winter bloom in parks and gardens and have discovered establishments like Rogers Gardens, with its staggering collections of flowering plants set up for sale. In a curious inversion of a typical pilgrimage ritual, where the pilgrim might expect to bring an offering to the special place, Rogers Gardens affords the opportunity to take an offering away and leave money.

One comfortable aspect of taking away an offering is that *buying* something is *doing* something, and it is probably accurate to note that Americans are happiest in our gardens and landscapes when we are doing something: barbecuing or swimming or drinking or answering the phone at poolside or driving a golf ball or a fast car. Even the *visible* opportunity to do something is important to us; it matters less whether we actually do it: it is a safe bet that our yards contain more swimming pools than swimmers, and if we could figure out how to transform our lawns into tennis courts without rendering them impassable, tennis courts might line every street.

Golf courses are collections of nine or eighteen pieces. They were not invented in North America—they began in Scotland—but they flourish here as a particularly attractive feature of the landscape, partly, one suspects, because the rather elaborate rules for their layout provide a disciplined formal

structure that ensures a certain amount of order and variety in their design. The smooth greens come in sequence, with grassy airways, rough meadows, sand traps, hills, and woods arranged to keep the player (and often the viewer) surprised and intrigued.

One problem with a collection (though not a great one, we suppose, for Hadrian, or Ch'ien Lung, or even Vita Sackville-West) is figuring out how to pay for the acquisitions. William Randolph Hearst (who collected his treasures and fantasies at San Simeon), and J. Paul Getty (with his reconstructed Pompeiian villa/museum, garden, and art collection overlooking the shore at Malibu), and Henry E. Huntington (who made a collection of roses, another of camellias, and a stunning one of cacti around his mansion near Pasadena) all did it in the obvious way: by amassing immense wealth first. Other Americans have found more surprising methods. The proprietors of Rogers Gardens sell the pieces and replace them with more. The collections of carefully constructed landscape settings, statuary, and even complete buildings at Forest Lawn are financed by selling burial plots (and that results in a collection of another kind). Tax deductions make possible the collections of gentlemen's farms in the environs of Baltimore and other cities, where rolling fields and cows and hedgerows maintained by people in high tax brackets are encouraged for the visual pleasure they give the rest of us. Walt Disney simply charged admission.

Simpler Settings

It isn't clear whether it is the extraordinary variety of natural landscapes in North America or the relative paucity of grand man-made gardens, but American attention to the landscape seems mostly to have been focused on natural wonders unchanged by the hand of man, big enough and empty enough of humankind to allow the viewer to imagine himself the first non-native ever to look upon them, as someone in fact had been not long before. Unique landscapes especially caught the national imagination: the Everglades, the Grand Canyon, the Tetons, Yellowstone, Yosemite, Monument Valley. They achieved what the artist aspired toward, beyond what most gardeners dared aspire: they were monumentally themselves and altogether unlike any place else on earth.

It may have been that the effect of this interest in unbeatable natural wonders was to push American gardens out of the competition and to cause them often to be very simple. A memorable example is the front lawn for the Breakers, the enormous Vanderbilt mansion at Newport, Rhode Island, built by 1895. It is a summer place by the seaside, though it is huge and formal. On the oceanside is a terrace, a few steps, and then an unbroken lawn to the edge of the cliff where the ocean starts. Just a lawn. It is hard to imagine a European house of comparable splendor that wouldn't have sported a much more elaborate garden. Yet on that site

the lawn is a wonder, suggesting in its simple sweep a compass that seems to extend on across the Atlantic to Spain.

Two of America's most memorable settings, in fact, never actually appeared outdoors but remained within the covers of books. They are Edgar Allen Poe's unforgettable descriptions of a domestically scaled but ethereally beautiful setting, more natural than devised, in a little valley in upstate New York, and the grander and more splendid Domain of Arnheim. True to its American source, the latter was far from any city and was meant to be enjoyed as a route. The description stops, in fact, just short of the gates to what we expected might be the goal of the journey and concentrates entirely on a river along which we glide through a natural landscape whose only veiled suggestion of the hand of man is an eerily unnatural perfection. There is not a pebble in the crystal clear water whose shape is not perfect, not a dead limb or a fallen branch upon the unblemished mossy banks. It might have been our North American garden among our great gardens, but we didn't trust ourselves to draw it. Certainly it would have been a perfect garden to serve a country that adored youth and couldn't face death.

National Country Garden

Compiled by Kyle Thayer
and Donlyn Lyndon

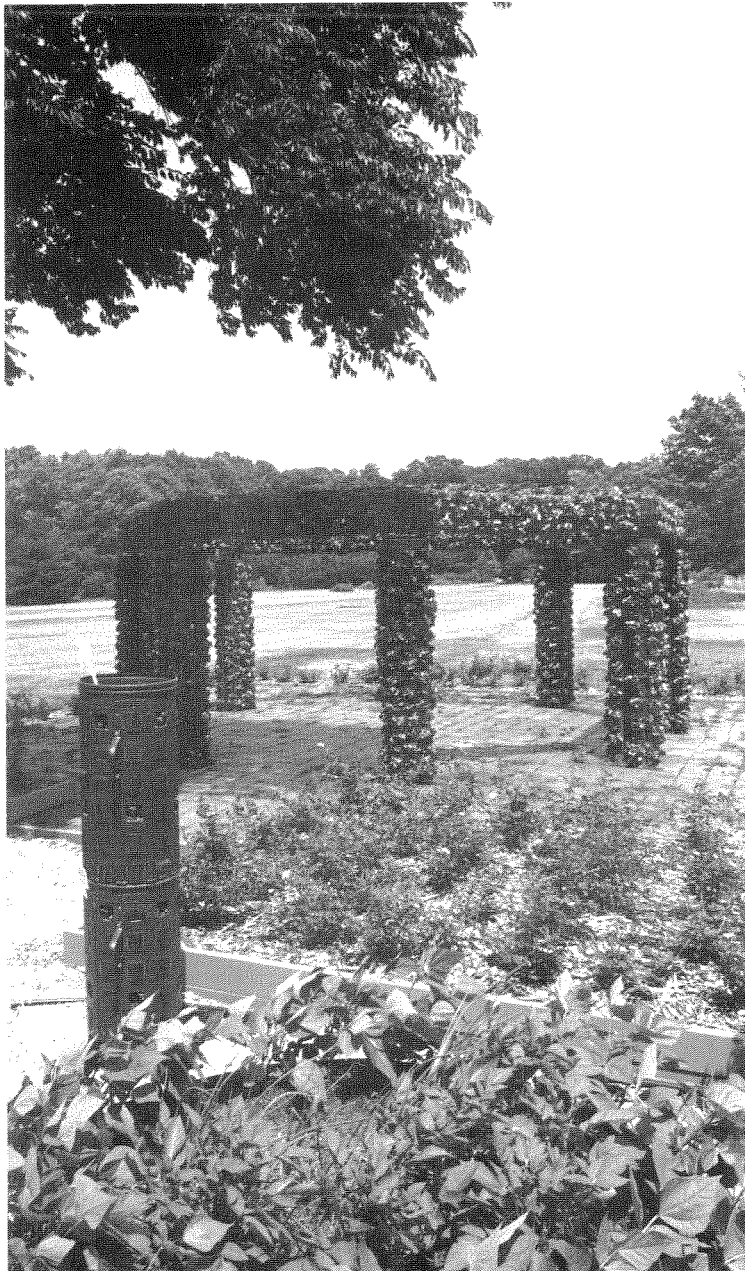
Red begonias, dusty miller, and summer madness tower thirty feet in the air to mark the opening of the National Country Garden's third season. Established in 1984 on a three-acre site at the U.S. National Arboretum in Washington, D.C., the educational public garden demonstrates innovative design solutions for intensive urban food and flower gardening. Originally constructed as a temporary exhibit, public response has been so enthusiastic that the garden has become an ongoing attraction. Brightly colored floral walls, purple paint, and colorful banners create a circuslike atmosphere that seeks to engage as well as to educate. Director Henry M. Cathey emphasizes that gardening should be a rewarding activity for anyone, regardless of circumstances; therefore, the various rooms of the garden are suggestive of qualities (and resources) that would be pertinent to various user groups.

Tommy Thompson of *Gardens for All* magazine of Burlington, Vermont, had an idea for a demonstration home garden that would be located at the National Arboretum. Director Henry M. Cathey, a dynamic and flamboyant spokesman for gardening, acted on the plan. Cathey called on Guy Rando, landscape architect from Reston, Virginia, to assist in the development of the concepts and design of the garden.

Rando created a series of over thirteen rooms that demonstrate the variety of rich results that can



I The National Country Garden
Photographs by Donlyn Lyndon

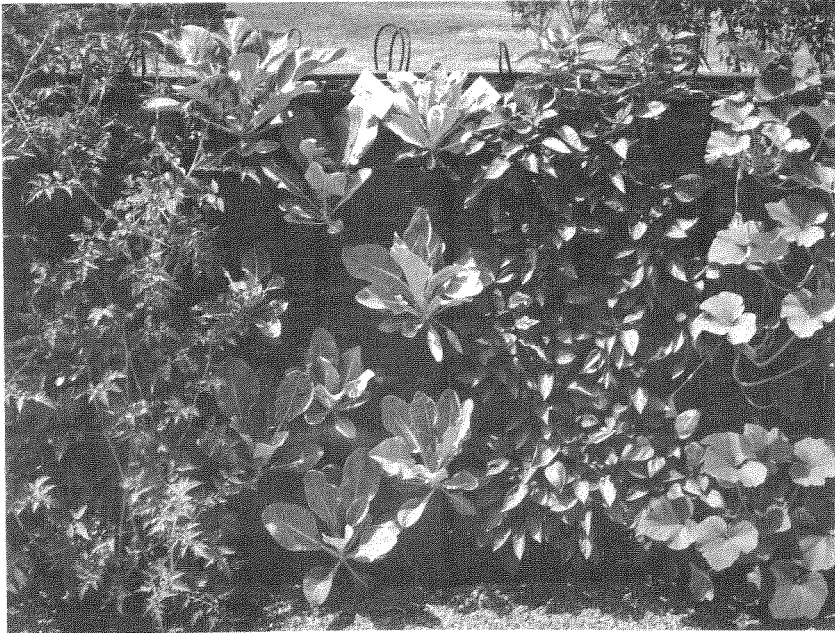


2

be achieved using simple means. A clothesline garden, various town house gardens, gardens that yield from \$50 to \$400 worth of produce, a third-world garden, and a garden for the physically impaired are laid out along an informal garden path. The sequence of spaces is defined by partitions, walls, and even a gazebo made from the Living Wall container system.

In truth, the framework for the garden contributes as much to the qualities it portrays as do the plants. A spectacular tower of flowering plants, strange mini-ziggaraunts, structured walls, and rows of plant columns are all constructed with the Living Wall container system. In its ingenuity, the system tends to upstage the humble acts of gardening. There are, however, some wonderfully lighthearted moments: an orchard of stacked containers grown green around their surfaces and capped by corn stalks, a perfectly beautiful stick-framed false front to signify a town house while making a very amiable limit to the garden space, a ring of plant columns standing in druidic splendor, and an assortment of gates and trellises that give structure overhead.

Originally developed for food production in third-world countries, the Living Wall Garden is a soilless container growing system that makes vertical gardening possible. The modular, stackable system is also well-suited for ornamental plants. A native of Brooklyn, Rando knows that urban dwellers may not have the room or the soil for



3



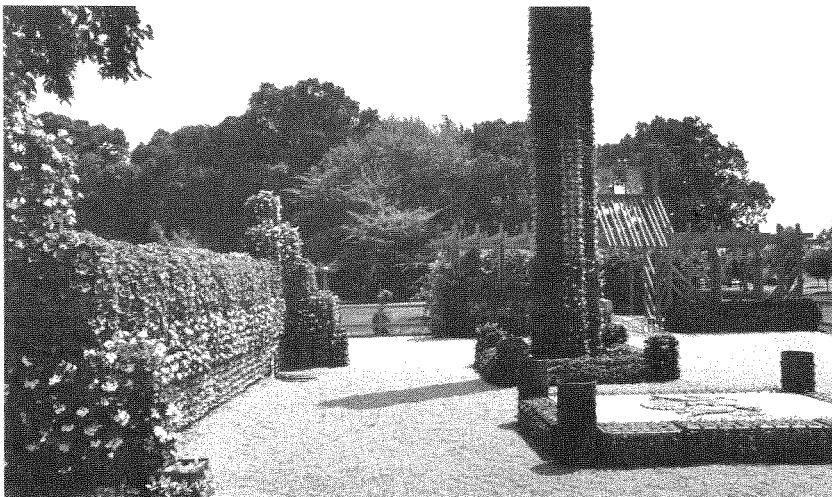
4

3 Vegetables in the Living Wall

4 Orchard of Vegetables



5



6

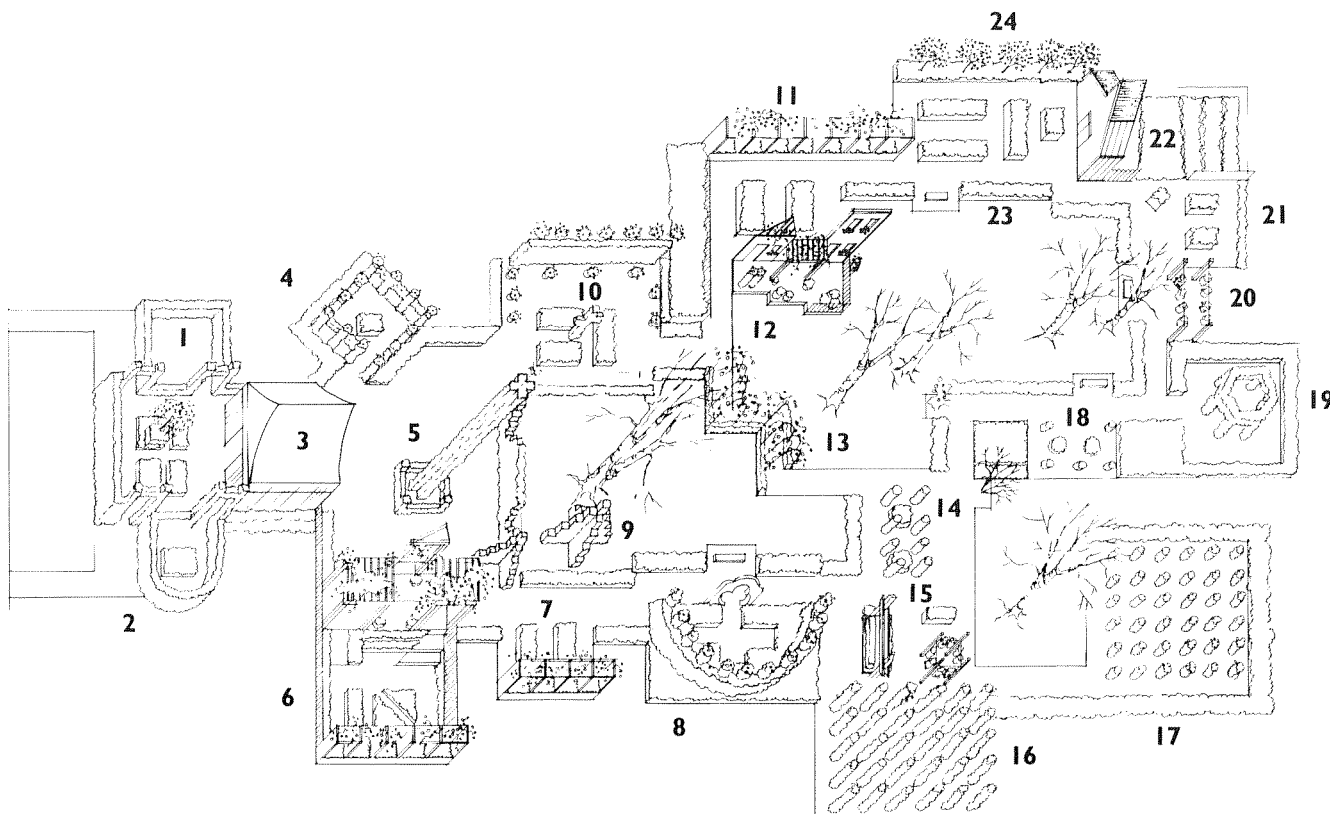
5 Townhouse With Windows

6 Geometry in the Garden

traditional gardening. The National Country Garden demonstrates how window sills, fences, balconies, or the sides of buildings can be turned into productive gardening spaces by using container growing systems.

The system of perforated plastic modular containers, filled with Rockwool or a mixture of silica and vermiculite, frees the gardener from the constraints of local soil conditions. The resulting vertical garden, while highly flexible and adaptable to a variety of conditions, is very literally not rooted in the place. The garden can even be moved to a new location. The system is expensive: \$24 buys a container large enough for thirteen plants, while an eighty-plant holder runs about \$90. The cost factor makes one doubt whether the system would find wide use among lower income gardeners, although it is pointed out that discarded commercial plastic milk crates, filled with peat moss and stacked, will do just as well.

Many of the features of the garden were constructed with volunteer labor using donated and found materials. "We have kept the design of these gardens simple," explains Rando. "Any of them can be built with cast-off materials and ordinary household tools." Old tires become raised planting beds. Lengths of discarded wood are crisscrossed into an attractive trellis covered with beans. A reflecting pool is fashioned from sand and large sheets of plastic. The collection of different materials are unified by coats of eye-popping, lilac-colored



paint. "Purple holds its own against any color," says Cathey. "It is an ideal color for the garden." It certainly contributes to the circus-like atmosphere, a comparison Cathey does nothing to discourage.

If gardening is elevated to pure spectacle, as it is in the National Country Garden, then it is because Cathey's missionary zeal demands that the word reach a large public. The word is that gardening is fun, healthy, and profitable.

It is worth noting, however, that much of the power of the place is rooted in the contrast between these close, clever little garden patches and the sweeping lawns and mature trees of the arboretum. Some of the latter have been skillfully incorporated in the layout of the

garden, and some mature trees may be available in urban settings. But the ennobling contrast of distance is less likely to be available to most of the public when they go home. Subtle arrangement, contrasts, and allusions will be needed to make a stack of flower-decked containers seem to be nearly as much fun when lodged in a conventional backyard.

National Country Garden, Axiometric view
(drawing courtesy of Guy L. Rondo and Associates)

1. Harvest displays
2. Ancient plants
3. Information tent
4. Herbs
5. Flower tower
6. Townhouse
7. \$100 yield garden
8. Exotics
9. Living wall ziggurat
10. Rose garden
11. \$200 yield garden
12. Apartment balcony gardens
13. Morning glory archway
14. Living wall vegetable garden
15. Handicap garden
16. Garden for the Third World
17. Garden for the Third World
18. Root crops
19. Living wall gazebo
20. Clothesline garden
21. Salad garden
22. Sunflowers
23. \$400 yield garden
24. Dwarf fruit tree orchard

John W. Hill
and Catherine Mahan



One of the characteristic features of the landscape in contemporary China is the tree-lined road. Beginning with the trip from Beijing's airport to the city, the traveler constantly moves through pathways edged by closely spaced trees. It is a vivid image, contributing powerfully to the look of China's environment. Sometimes the allée is bordered with single rows of columnar evergreens or deciduous trees; sometimes, especially where wind erosion and airborne dust are problems, there are three or four rows. What is special about China's street trees is the closeness of their spacing and their constant presence along the roads throughout so much of the country. Not every road is tree-lined, but in the aggregate, the scale of this landscape enterprise is staggering. In the Beijing municipality alone, there are now more than 64,000 km of closely spaced street trees.¹

On an exchange professorship to China a few years ago, we began wondering about the origins of this convention. In our consulting work, the subject of appropriate street-tree spacing is often hotly debated. Baltimore, our home, has had a street-tree planting program for two decades, paralleling its urban revitalization efforts. Two opposing points of view frequently surface with regard to local street-tree spacing, especially in city Design Advisory Panel reviews of specific urban design proposals. One side argues the close spacing of trees as architectonic elements, the other, a wider spacing permitting individual trees to develop their full canopies.

This argument has been going on in professional circles for years. The prevalent opinion usually favors wide spacing and has its origins in the eighteenth-century work of Kent, Brown, and Repton. Their work was rooted in a "stewardship" concept of nature, drawing for inspiration on images of mythic natural landscapes. Groves were planted as birds and the winds might have planted them, and when individual trees were considered, they were usually displayed as landscape ornaments. In the eighteenth century, of course, this approach was applied with great artifice, in the service of picturesque composition. The resulting designs became fashionable, leading to a considerable relandscaping of England's countryside. The ultimate result was the "look" now associated with the English countryside. The theoretical point of view embodied in this English landscape tradition gained additional status in America in the nineteenth-century work of Frederick Law Olmsted.

In the American version of the English tradition, ornamental street trees are seen to possess a development potential that should be respected. Given this "horticultural" perspective, street trees are conceptualized as a series of individual specimens, not a single design composition created by their mass; their spacing should be sufficient to permit the full flowering of their canopies. If trees are regarded as design elements of an entire streetscape, however, tighter spacing is necessary to achieve visual closure.

Sketches based on the authors' photographs are by Shelly Rentsch.

Donald Wyman, horticulturist at the Arnold Arboretum in Boston from 1936 to 1969, was a major proponent of wide spacing for street trees. In *Trees for American Gardens*, an influential and widely used textbook, he argued that “street trees should not be planted opposite each other but should alternate, allowing for a greater development of the tops. Spacing should be at least 75 feet. . . . it is far better to plant fewer trees and take care of them properly, allowing them plenty of room for development, than to crowd them close together in order to make a ‘show’. . . .” In the open countryside, Wyman recommended considerably greater intervals: “(highway trees) should be planted irregularly 75 to 300 feet apart. . . .”²

In practice, these points of view have produced streetscapes in America very different from those in China. In the twentieth century, our street trees have tended to be widely spaced, depending on their canopies rather than their trunks for visual effect. Given the observed differences between the two patterns of practice, and the power of either point of view to structure an entire landscape “look” and image, it is interesting to speculate on the ability of such design attitudes to survive and, over long periods of time, to form the environmental traditions that distinguish one part of the world from another. The Chinese landscape, framed by its tree-lined roads and streets, presents an inescapable lesson in the power of such traditions to affect the look of a whole country. Where

did China’s street-lined planting convention get started?

We stumbled across a partial answer to this question after our return from China in 1982 in the course of reading *The Travels* of Marco Polo. In his memoirs of his travels between A.D. 1268 and 1295, Marco Polo devoted considerable attention to descriptions of the Great Khan’s enlightened administration and practices. Having served as a kind of personal envoy of Kublai Khan for some seventeen years, Marco Polo had extensive opportunities to travel within the khan’s empire, around what comprises modern-day China. In *The Travels*, the following appears:

Of the trees which he causes to be planted at the sides of the roads, and of the order in which they are kept.

There is another regulation adopted by the grand khan, equally ornamental and useful. At both sides of the public roads he causes trees to be planted, of a kind that become large and tall, and being only two paces asunder, they serve (besides the advantage of their shade in summer) to point out the road (when the ground is covered with snow); which is of great assistance and affords much comfort to travellers. This is done along all the high roads, where the nature of the soil admits of plantation; but when the way lies through sandy deserts or over rocky mountains, where it is impossible to have trees, he



1 Residential street in Suzhou

2 Road to the Ming Tombs, Beijing



3

orders stones to be placed and columns to be erected, as marks for guidance. He also appoints officers of rank, whose duty it is to see that all these are properly arranged and the roads constantly kept in good order. Besides the motives that have been assigned for these plantations, it may be added that the grand khan is the more disposed to make them, from the circumstance of his diviners and astrologers having declared that those who plant trees are rewarded with long life.³

Whatever the provenance of his notion, the Grand Khan established by dictum not only the street-tree planting policy but the rules regarding its application throughout his empire in the late thirteenth century. It is unclear how the tumultuous events of the succeeding centuries threatened the paradigm or whether there was any substantial continuity in the program he initiated, but the khan's original principles have survived and continue to inform China's extensive tree-planting program, now directed to both environmental and ecological concerns. Though China varies greatly in its visual environmental character, the thematic character of modern-day Chinese roads is one source of a common "look" for the whole country, contributing an element of visual coherence to this disparate nation of a billion people. Kublai Khan established both the innovation and the conventions of street-tree planting in China over seven hundred years ago. His innovation evolved into a tradition

that has affected the environmental character of a large part of the modern world, suggesting the power of design attitudes to shape a national environment.

NOTES

- 1 Figure from the Beijing Landscape Architectural Bureau.
- 2 Donald Wyman, *Trees for American Gardens* (New York: Macmillan, 1974).
- 3 Marco Polo, *The Travels* (New York: Orion Press). This is a translation of a fourteenth-century manuscript in the collection of the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.

3 Covered walk, The Summer Palace, Beijing