

# Site LINES

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## Letter from the Editor

The inaugural issue of *Site/Lines* is the successor to *Viewpoints*, formerly published under the sponsorship of the Bard Graduate Center. Now published by the **Foundation for Landscape Studies**, *Site/Lines* has been expanded in page count and content.

*Site/Lines* continues the cultural commentary initiated in the pages of its predecessor, serving as a literary forum for essays and reviews of books, exhibitions, and designs dealing with landscape themes and projects, an area often overlooked in the press and in other journals and reviews. It does not compete with scholarly journals that publish academic research papers as there are already excellent journals that do so. Rather, it occupies a niche in the middle ground somewhere between the scholarly journal and the garden magazine.

*Site/Lines* is “A Journal of Place.” In our terms, landscape is not simply a subject

for critical assessment. Places are personal and experiential. *Site/Lines* therefore offers essays about sensory experience gained through travel, daily observation, and the creation of those personal paradises called gardens.

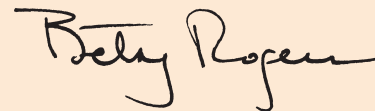
Our definition of landscape is a broad one. It embraces ordinary – sometimes called vernacular – scenery, city planning, and the protection of wild and rural environments. Reception, or the social life of landscapes – in other words, how they are received by different societies over time – is also an important part of our purview.

*Site/Lines* covers the portrayal of landscape ideals and conditions in the fine arts, including the art of photography. Its subject matter also includes the practical disciplines of landscape architecture and landscape management.

The Foundation for Landscape Studies seeks to promote the growth of the field of landscape studies both within and outside the academy. In addition to the publication of *Site/Lines*, the Foundation will expand the contents of the Internet-accessible digital archive of historic landscape images known as *Catena*, an initial component of which has been carried out under the auspices of the Bard Graduate Center according to the terms of a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Other mission-related goals include the sponsorship of lecture series (see **Calendar**, p. 22) and collaboration in other ways with various institutions and organizations seeking to broaden landscape history scholarship and historic landscape preservation (see **Field Notes**, p. 23).

In closing, I wish to thank Susan Soros, director of the Bard Graduate Center, for the opportunity over the past four years to initiate Garden

History and Landscape Studies, a series of courses that now enrich the school’s Decorative Arts curriculum. Because, like the BGC, the Foundation for Landscape Studies is a not-for-profit organization, its funding comes through charitable donations. At the present time, *Site/Lines* is not a subscription publication. Its continuation therefore depends upon reader support and general contributions to the Foundation. Included in this issue is a solicitation envelope encouraging you to help further our work. I hope that you will consider *Site/Lines* and the rest of the Foundation’s mission worthy of your support.



Elizabeth Barlow Rogers  
*Site/Lines* Editor  
and President,  
Foundation for Landscape  
Studies

## Three Modern Designers and Their Gardens

Before “modern” became “modernism” – a style like any other – it was a cause motivated by the architectural profession’s belief in its ability to significantly improve the human condition by means of an international machine-age design aesthetic. Le Corbusier, who preached a gospel composed of aphoristic pronouncements, railed famously against bourgeois eclecticism – “the styles.” History was over. The substitution of industrially manufactured structural parts for an artisan-crafted building technology elicited an ornament-shorn, form-follows-function architectural purism. Rejecting the oppression-tainted past, modernism looked toward a utopian egalitarian future. New architectural forms and urban planning schemes would put decent living standards within universal reach, leveling class distinctions, while the shorter work week would create a new commodity: leisure. Thus had the altered ethos caused by the vast political, social, and economic upheavals at the end of the nineteenth century set the stage for the self-conscious modernity that guided many kinds of bold experiments in the first two-thirds of the twentieth.

Such radical ideology was too naively idealistic and authoritarian to survive the vagaries of human nature nor did it embrace nature itself as the wellspring of all life or consider its need for protection and stewardship. In this context, the garden was a problematical anomaly. Inherently of nature, it defied the hubristic assumption of modernism that humans can dominate nature through engineering technology. In the brave new world coming into being in the wake of World War I, the garden would necessarily either remain moored to its Arts and Crafts recent past or inflect the aesthetic of modernism to accommodate nature in varying degrees while at the same time adopting and adapting itself to the abstract forms of the period.

In this context three American modernists – Russel Wright (1904-1976), Isamu Noguchi (1904-1988), and Jack Lenor Larsen (b. 1927) – who are better known in the realm of art and design, deserve recognition as garden innovators able to achieve a synthesis between art and nature. Indeed, it was in their com-

### On the Cover:

At Manitoga, Russel Wright cleared paths in the hemlock forest, used natural rock outcrops and boulders, and cultivated moss to allow the visitor to experience the landscape as one of mystery and surprise.

mitment to both the tenets of modernism and to nature that they expressed their design genius. Mediating this cross-fertilization was their practice of both craft and industrial design technologies as well as traditional and new means of making art.

Space – the absence that energizes presence, the solid’s complementary void, and the pattern’s necessary background – is an essential ingredient of artistic composition. In this regard, the modernist approach to landscape design has been influenced by that of Japan, with its attention to the manner in which landscape objects relate to one another within a particular spatial envelope. Modernist landscape designers also found inspiration in the way space is manipulated in the Japanese stroll garden in a hide-and-reveal fashion, a simultaneous flowing and partial partitioning of the garden into discrete areas. In the case of small courtyard viewing gardens, it has drawn on the *kare sansui* (dry landscape) tradition of Zen temple gardens such as Ryoanji with their interpenetrating relationship of indoor and outdoor space both physically and visually and their subdued palette of materials – a minimum of ingeniously placed moss-lapped rocks within a spatial plane of river-resembling raked gravel. This attention to ground-plane pattern and texture and the ineffable balance attained by the asymmetrical placement of a few basic materials in an abstract arrangement accords with what Christopher Tunnard in his influential book *Gardens in the Modern Landscape* (London: Architectural Press, 1938) called “occult symmetry” – a composition of objects held in equilibrium along a diagonal axis.

Out of their commitment to the tenets of modernism, combined with the desire to explore its sensuous potential through an alliance of nature with design, Wright, Noguchi, and Larsen pursued their respective careers. Their success as modern garden makers is an outgrowth of their protean creativity in their individual fields.

### Russel Wright

Many visitors to Manitoga, the seventy-five-acre forested site of an abandoned quarry in the Hudson Highlands that Russel Wright purchased in 1942, are not aware of the fact that it is a designed landscape. The character of the property is the opposite of that at Larsen’s LongHouse, which sits on the alluvial edge of Long Island’s glacial moraine. Manitoga’s underlying landscape, which is defined by giant boulders and the granite cliffs of the Hudson Highlands, was created by the pressure of a mighty mass of ice that scoured

ancient bedrock and deepened the river gorge to a depth one thousand feet below sea level. Nor was Wright a passionate plantsman like Larsen, whose garden boasts many exotic as well as native species. He took the vegetative palette of the place – white oak (*Quercus alba*), gray birch (*Betula populifolia*), red cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*), flowering dogwood (*Cornus florida*), mountain laurel (*Kalmia latifolia*), sassafras (*Sassafras albidum*), lowbush blueberry (*Vaccinium angustifolium*), huckleberry (*Gaylussacia baccata*), and hillside stands of tall hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*) – along with the massive rocks on the property as his materials. Wright’s art was that of editing nature, and his basic tools were, he said, “a grub hoe, bush-whack, machete, aerosol spray, portable spray tank, pruning clippers, ax, pruning saw, shovel, chain saw, baskets, crowbars, pick, sickle.” In the words of Frederic Rich, president of the Scenic Hudson Land Trust and chairman of the Foundation for Landscape Studies, Manitoga is “a place as massively altered as any landscape by Capability Brown, a place as much a garden as a grand park by Le Nôtre, and yet also a place totally at home and at peace with its ecological and cultural setting.”

For the first fifteen years that he owned Manitoga, Wright lived in an existing cottage near the entrance to the property. In the early 1950s he began dreaming of, and designing, another kind of house, one that would be both an experimental laboratory and a case study for the modern home. It would combine new industrial materials (Wright pioneered the use of kitchen Formica) and a deep respect for the natural environment. His stated aim was “the wedding of the house [he often called it a shelter to minimize its importance] to the surrounding land.” For Wright, with his instinct for discovering drama in nature, this meant perching it as lightly as a butterfly on the south-facing lip of the old quarry. He filled the quarry bottom with water by diverting a stream, thereby making a pond that also served as a swimming hole in summer and an ice-skating



Russel Wright

rink in winter. The music of water cascading over rocks into this pond is one of the finest pleasures the place offers the visitor today.

Wright’s theatrical imagination (while still a freshman, he had been president of Princeton’s Triangle Club, there discovering his talent for stage design) is apparent in the way in which he conceived the house not as a shell divided into rooms but rather as a series of spaces, each one carefully framing a particular view. Because of this and also to conform to the stratified character of the quarry he designed the house on no less than eleven levels. Wright reinforced the house’s role as an industrial artifact in intimate contact with nature by using enormous boulders selected from the property for the fireplace in conjunction with floor-to-ceiling glass windows. He imbedded leaves and other forest materials in translucent laminated-plastic shoji screens serving as room dividers. He covered the flat metal-and-gravel roof with vegetation, anticipating “green architecture” by several decades, and connected the house and his studio by a vine-clad pergola.

His daughter, Anne Wright, grew up in Dragon Rock, as her father named the house because of her description of the shape of a large boulder that looked to her “like a dragon drinking water.” Today, she lives nearby, maintaining a continuing relationship with the property as a member of the board of the Manitoga Trust. When she told me that her godmother and her mother’s best friend was Laura Wood Roper, author of the definitive biography of Frederick Law Olmsted (*FLO: A Biography of Frederick Law Olmsted*; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), I started to speculate on how much Wright had in common with the great nineteenth-century park builder. In creating parks, Olmsted often reshaped unpromising sites, respecting and enhancing their innate geophysical properties, such as in Central Park, where he used the glacially polished outcrops of Manhattan schist as the bones of the Greensward Plan he prepared with architect Calvert Vaux. However, Wright was too independent-minded a designer and too committed to advancing the cause of American modernism to have admitted to influences, either Olmstedian or Japanese. Yet follow the gently winding paths he cut through his woods, thinning and pruning trees in order to reveal surprising vistas, or look at the way he cultivated dense carpets of moss and used stones as principal features. His affinity with the great traditions of naturalistic park building and the landscape design aesthetic of Japan, where he had worked for a period of time, is obvious. Well before the charismatic guru of environmental design Ian McHarg wrote his classic *Design with Nature* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1969), Wright was

doing just that.

Like the landscape architect Thomas Church, who also pioneered the casual life-style of the increasingly prosperous yet servantless middle class in the post-World War II years, Wright saw his principal role both as an industrial designer and garden maker and as that of a teacher. With even more opinionated didacticism than Church reveals in his cheerfully instructive *Gardens Are for People* (New York: Reinhold Publishing Company, 1955), Wright advocated his philosophy of simple, efficiently organized home furnishings and how-to naturalistic garden design. His *Guide to Easier Living* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1950), coauthored with his wife Mary, was in its day a modern bride's primer. It embodies modernism's optimistic vision of the future and repudiation of the historical past: "We look forward to the day when living room, dining room, and kitchen will break through the walls that arbitrarily divide them, and become simply friendly areas of one large, gracious, and beautiful room." This kind of open floor plan did not admit household disarray. Anne Wright says:

My father could be described as a benevolent despot. There was a place for everything, and everything had to be in its place. He was a perfectionist who demanded order and total control over every detail of design and daily life. Dinnerware and décor had to be coordinated with the seasons, and he made lists of instructions for everything. He was painfully shy, but it was hard to know that. People in the arts loved him, and he was definitely not a loner. But I think you could say that he entertained not for the sake of conviviality but in order to stage a presentation; that was his gift to his guests.

At a time when words like "etiquette" and "manners" still had currency and "entertainment" meant having friends over for dinner rather than being stimulated by spectacle, Russel Wright wrote, "We are making a new etiquette, with a new set of manners for both hosts and guests. They are better manners, more truly gracious, because they are sincere, not a counterfeit of a vanished aristocracy but an honest product of our times." He made the further point that "the new hospitality cannot function smoothly without the new-style guest." To be asked back to Manitoga, the duties of the "new-style guest" were not limited to carrying dishes to the kitchen. Guests were

expected to work with Wright to carry out his vision of a woodland garden. Anne Wright says, "My father would have lists already made and at everyone's place when they came to breakfast. Someone would be assigned to weed moss, another to rake, and someone else to help my father move boulders."

For Carol Franklin, a second cousin of Mary Wright's, the opportunity to work on the creation of Manitoga was an unmitigated joy. She and her husband Colin, partners along with Leslie and Rolf Sauer in the landscape architecture firm of Andropogon (all four had studied with McHarg at the University of Pennsylvania), would drive up from Philadelphia on weekends. Franklin says:

Going to Manitoga for those week ends right after studying landscape architecture at Penn was the most profound thing that happened to me in my professional life. Russel made tangible and real in terms of landscape art McHarg's broader philosophy as a land planner. He wanted to create a garden that was immediate, sensual, experiential – a reaction to what was conventional and puritanical. He staged events to further this kind of awareness. He occasionally even went so far as to have naked flute players appear in the woods. He wanted to create a visceral impression. Whether you were inside the house eating a saffron-colored mushroom Russel had gathered in the woods and served on a chutney-colored plate or walking along a path where ferns brushed your ankles, surprising spaces appeared like pearls on a string, each with its own special climax followed by an epilogue. Manitoga was an endless experiment and an endless presentation. You can't believe how magical the place was when Russel was still alive. He saw landscape as stage set design; Manitoga then was garden as theater. I found it a way of life that was perfectly transcendental.

What was it like to follow Wright into the garden? Franklin recalls:

He would take whichever one of his canes he felt appropriate – those wonderfully designed old canes he collected, which now hang on hooks near the entrance to Dragon Rock – and stomp off into the woods. You should have heard him describe a special artistic effect he wanted to achieve and the reasons for it. I remember walking with him to an undeveloped part of the property that looked like nothing but a tangle of brush. Russel then painted in words and gestures his vision for what he wanted that spot to be. He wanted to clear away the brambles and raise the branch-

es of the hemlocks to make them look grand, darker, more dramatic. Then he would show us how he was going to reveal a spill with a view back to a waterfall. He was always teaching you sensory aesthetics, making you lick rainwater off hemlock leaves and feel the texture of pine needles underfoot. Colin and I would work with him all week end and then go back to Philadelphia feeling what a privilege it had been. My God, now I could understand what landscape architects really could do to create drama and special beauty! In that way, Russel was my mentor. His sense of how to bring out drama in nature has guided my practice ever since.

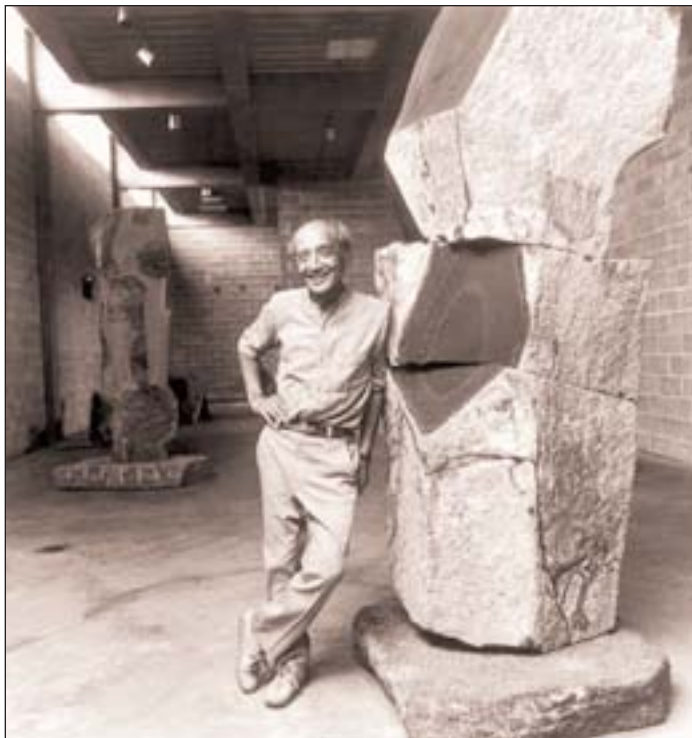
I asked Franklin what she considered the essence of his art. She replied:

At Manitoga, the path becomes a journey into the secrets of the forest. Russel understood the art of making a path revelatory, so that the design structure reflected and illuminated the actual processes of a landscape. He wanted the landscape to express both time and seasonality. He had a deeply ingrained sense of place and sense of time, and he made us aware of place and time in forceful ways. For instance, after the hurricane of 1976, to reveal the force of nature in the forest, he left a fallen giant white pine lying on the trail with a number of other trees that had also been blown down. He made a springtime path to display lady slippers and other ephemeral beauties, an autumn path for fall color that doubled as a west-facing sunset path, a winter walk where there were evergreens lit by the morning sun. He planted and managed this landscape, separating the layers of the forest so that there are places with only canopy and understory and no shrub layer, or only canopy and herbaceous layers, or only shrub layers. Being different from the surrounding forest of many layers, these places where he eliminated all but one or two layers stood out and could be seen as a hole or room in the forest. His integrating vision changed all the components so that each was enriched, enhanced, and transformed by the other. Just as the house is interwoven with the site, the hillside is connected by views to its larger context of the Hudson River Valley, and the visitors themselves are involved in an intimate and unfolding relationship to the place.

## Isamu Noguchi

As a modernist landscape designer, Isamu Noguchi had an equally intense but more conceptual approach to nature than Russel Wright, one not rooted in an artistic dialogue with a particular piece of land. For him, both sculpture and landscape design (he did not think of the two arts as separate) were about shaping space abstractly. He used plants – trees, shrubs, and groundcovers rather than flowers – sparingly, if at all, as a green foil to set off stone surfaces, as vertical accents to echo upright sculpture, and as a means of defining shapes upon the ground plane. Like Roberto Burle Marx, the great Brazilian artist and landscape designer, he brought to his gardens the biomorphic shapes of Miró and Arp, the admired modern artists of his day. The smooth, highly polished abstract lines of Constantin Brancusi, the Romanian sculptor with whom he had served as an apprentice in Paris in 1928 at the beginning of his career, remained for him a lifelong influence. Brancusi, with his contempt for clay modeling, taught Noguchi the expressive power of stone, which remained his preferred medium both as a sculptor and as a garden designer. Even some of Noguchi's works in bronze echo the form of primordial stones.

Noguchi lived with his American mother in Japan until she sent him to boarding school in the United States at the age of thirteen. In 1931, after having taken up residence in New York City and then in Paris, he returned to Japan to reconnect with his Japanese roots. Shunned by his father, who now lived in Tokyo with his Japanese wife and family, he fled to Kyoto, where he discovered the beauty of Zen gardens. What he admired most was the illusion their carefully selected and placed rocks gave of emergence, of their being “the bones of the earth,” the way they were “planted to suggest a protuberance from the primordial mass below.” In his own later garden designs, Noguchi maintained, “Plants and trees,



no matter how large, are like weeds that come and go, but a garden's essential quality is maintained through the disposition of its rocks.”

Thus, in what he referred to as his “close embrace of the earth” during this period, Noguchi found his identity as an artist. At the same time, for him both as sculptor and landscape designer, space was as important as the materiality of stone: “All dimensions are but measures of it. . . . Movement, light, and time itself are also qualities of space.” His collaboration with the choreographer Martha Graham furthered his understanding of landscape design as “ambulatory space.” His garden designs imply movement through space and multidirectional viewing of space-defining sculptural elements.

In 1956, Noguchi began designing a garden for the UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization) House in Paris. Now he was able to put into practice his own modern landscape design theory incorporating the lessons he had learned in Japan: “It was my first great lesson in the sculpture of space through making a somewhat Japanese Garden.” The word “somewhat” is particularly relevant here as Marc Treib points out in *Noguchi in Paris: The UNESCO Garden* (San Francisco: William Stout Architectural Books, 2003). For the UNESCO garden, Noguchi wished to

combine some especially beautiful blue stones he selected with the help of Japan's finest twentieth-century garden designer, Mirei Shigemori, from the Ayu-Kui-Gawa River on the island of Shikoku with the biomorphic shapes formed by contrasting paving materials. On the site he maintained an uneasy relationship with Tuoemon Sano, the master gardener who came to Paris to help Noguchi place the imported stones according to time-honored Japanese garden

View of the Sculpture Garden at The Noguchi Garden Museum, Long Island City, New York



design principles. It was not surprising that Noguchi's bold synthesis of traditional and modern was disturbing to this sixteenth-generation professional.

According to Treib:

A Japanese sensibility infuses Noguchi's work. But it is not purely Japanese; certainly it does not rely on the purity of traditional Japanese garden concepts and techniques. These ideas, and certain of the features, possibly informed the making of the UNESCO garden and terrace, but the forms they eventually took all but completely disguised any sense of their origins. Like Noguchi himself, the garden is Japanese-American, and it is . . . a crucial stopping point on the road to the modern sculptural landscape – and a crucial step for Isamu Noguchi, as one of that landscape's principal creators.

Noguchi's bicultural, cosmopolitan identity made him at home everywhere and nowhere as he pursued his global wanderings. His mixed racial background, a source of discrimination in his early years in Japan and then, later, in xenophobic World War II America, gave a melancholy strain to his character. This was reinforced by his sense of modern humanity's fundamental loneliness, its loss of shared systems of religious belief and communal ritual. His interest in the metaphorical aspects of cosmology furnished his imagination with many prehistoric and ancient forms ranging from Hindu temples to Native American mounds. Well before the term “earthworks” was coined by Robert Smithson, Noguchi was, like some

contemporary conceptual artists, designing works in and of the land, unbuilt projects such as *Sculpture to Be Seen from Mars*, that in scale and form evoke the enigmatic remains of former civilizations and, perhaps, the end of our own.

In a more practical vein in line with his desire to turn his art toward socially useful ends, Noguchi sought opportunities to design children's playgrounds. He envisioned them with a sculptor's imagination, creating three-dimensional models out of clay with contoured surfaces intended for climbing and exploring. These remain abstractly beautiful as bas-reliefs. The idea of playgrounds as protoearthworks was contemptuously opposed by New York City Parks Commissioner Robert Moses, whom Noguchi bitterly characterized as "the city's self-appointed guardian against any art forms except banker's special neo-Georgian" after having met defeat more than once at the hands of that powerful official. Only in Japan with the construction of Kodomo No Kuni (Children's Land) near Tokyo in 1966 did he see his first playground realized.

Like Wright, Noguchi saw modern design as a democratic mission, a way of bringing affordable, utilitarian products to a wide segment of the population. According to Shoji Sadao,

Buckminster Fuller's architectural partner, to whom Noguchi continually turned for practical advice, "He believed that environments affect people's lives. He wanted to influence people's surroundings, and that is why he designed the Akari lamps [a still-popular line of lanternlike lighting] and furniture, even though other people thought this was a trivial pursuit and misuse of an important artist's talent. But he wanted to affect change, and like other modernists including Bucky, he carried a utopian socialist message."

In 1961, Noguchi purchased a former factory in Long Island City, Queens, which he used as his studio and living quarters. In 1981, he bought an adjacent property and with Sadao began the construction of the Isamu Noguchi Garden Museum, which officially opened in 1985. Japan remained the other pole of his existence ("Why do I go back to Japan except to renew my contact with the earth?"), and beginning in 1969 he started to spend several months each year in his other studio in the village of Mure on the Inland Sea coast of Shikoku. Inspired by the profound dialogue between carved stone and natural rock formations and the incomparable masonry walls of the Inca builders at Machu Picchu in Peru, he was creating a sculpture garden on the hillside above his house at the time of his death in 1988.

In Jerusalem, he earlier had built another hillside garden, the five-acre Billy Rose Sculpture Garden (1960-65). By the 1970s, Noguchi's reputation as a modern sculptor and designer of public spaces and boldly original fountains was secure, and he began to execute several important commissions: the Dodge Fountain and Philip A. Hart Plaza in Detroit (1972); the Intetra Mist Fountain for the Society of the Four Arts, Palm Beach (1974); Playscapes in Piedmont Park, Atlanta (1976); Momo Taro for the Storm King Art Center in

Mountainville, New York (1977); the Lillie and Roy Cullen Sculpture Garden at the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston, with Shoji Sadao (1978-86); California Scenario at Two Town Center in South Coast Plaza, Costa Mesa (1980-82); and a master plan for a four-hundred-acre park for Sapporo, Japan (1988, with construction completed under the direction of Sadao, 2005).

### Jack Lenor Larsen

Jack Lenor Larsen grew up in Seattle on Puget Sound with woods and water close by. He dates his career as a gardener to the age of three when he was given radish seeds by a friend of his father and discovered success six weeks later. By the time he was ten, he had become a plant collector, bringing home from Sunday drives with his family seedling trees, trilliums, and other wildlings. Soon he began tending neighbors' gardens and entering junior high school garden competitions. Later, at the University of Southern California, he studied architecture, philosophy, and French while marveling "at the ranges of texture in California foliage and the remarkable cones and seed pods I collected on bike rides." Having discovered weaving, Larsen set up a loom at home and tried integrating these and other natural materials into woven fabric samples. After he returned to Seattle to attend the University of Washington, he took courses in fabric design and, at the behest of a new professor from the Cranbrook Academy of Art, enrolled in that well-known arts and crafts institution in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, from which he graduated with a master of fine arts degree in 1951.

Blessed by an engaging, sunny personality, a talent for friendship, abundant creativity, and a growing reputation as a textile designer, Larsen decided to move to New York City, where he found studio space and clients, including Lever Brothers, the company for whose new Park Avenue headquarters he made the lobby curtain, a translucent lace weave of linen cord and gold metallic yarn. In 1952, with the financial assistance of a generous patron, he bought a defunct handweaving studio on 22nd Street and Park Avenue South. With incorporation and the assistance of weavers coming out



View of Noguchi's garden in Mure, Japan

of Cranbrook and Black Mountain College in Asheville, North Carolina, his business was launched.

Weaving is one of the world's most ubiquitous crafts, and the textile designs and methods of native weavers in many countries inspired several of Larsen's most imaginative and popular fabric collections. In *A Weaver's Memoir* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1998), he recounts his adventurous journeys in several faraway lands in the days before mass travel. Peru, Mexico, Scandinavia, New Zealand, Japan, Hong Kong, Taiwan, South Vietnam, Thailand, Burma, Korea, West Africa, South Africa, Afghanistan, Sikkim, China, India, Israel, Ireland – all these countries furnished him with fresh sights, contacts with weavers and other craftsmen, new friends, exposure to great works of architecture, and an interest in various construction techniques. In the late 1950s, Russel Wright invited Larsen to join a team that had been commissioned by the U.S. State Department to work with native craftsmen to design exports that would boost the local economies of Taiwan and South Vietnam. In South Vietnam Larsen learned to work with dyed sisal and banana fiber and assisted a group of Catholic refugee weavers from North Vietnam to weave sea grass into smooth, richly colored, striped, flat rugs.



Jack Lenor Larsen

In Rangoon he found “the broadest array of weavers I had yet seen, an amalgam of all the skills and traditions of Europe and India.” But Japan remains his favorite country, a place to which he travels at least once a year.

Watching a British documentary film about the West African colonies when he was nine years old, Larsen had become fascinated with some houses in the background: “Some looked like great beehives built of clay, others were round wooden structures grouped in a circle, and still others resembled thick-walled, enormous sand castles gleaming against the dusty desert backdrop.” The African Collection inspired by his 1961 trip there “catapulted our small firm from being an insider's source to being as close as we would ever be to a household word.” It also inspired the construction of Round House, his first country house and garden.

The prior year Larsen had purchased abandoned farmland on the edge of East Hampton's Great North Woods. To his cre-

ative eye, the site was “picture-perfect.” In his *Memoir* he describes “the sculptural cedar trees (*Juniperus virginiana*) parading into the distance like a Greek Chorus.” Here, he says, “On fourteen acres I had my little kingdom of cedars and pines in grassy meadows.” Then, when the opportunity came, he bought sixteen acres of adjacent woodland along the north drive of Round House in order to protect his garden views. Longer abandoned and, with its dense underbrush and tangled vines, less prepossessing, it nevertheless provided Larsen, with his passion for designing beautiful spaces as well as beautiful fabrics, another opportunity to build. Since he had already filled the Round House property with gardens, selling it in order to build anew on his adjacent land also gave him the chance to keep on creating new garden sequences.

I visited him one sunny spring Saturday as light poured in the expansive windows of the airy, high-roofed, upper-story living room of his spacious home at LongHouse Reserve, the result of that decision. Larsen told me:

In 1986, I decided I wanted a house with more space – waste space. . . . Modernism was about designing tightly and efficiently. I wanted this house to be a case study for a more sensuous and spacious modernism. It is based on caring about materials and investing in them. You can make structures that are flexible and luxurious in a simple way. Now I wanted

something more sensitive in terms of mass and textures. All those trips to Japan taught me a simple aesthetic enriched by craft.

To design and build LongHouse, Larsen worked for five years with his longtime collaborator, architect Charles Forberg. This time his principal inspiration was the Ise Shrine in Japan. He recently had become aware of “the subtle perfection of Ise's majestic proportions, with massive wood-gabled roofs above buildings raised on stilts.” Since Larsen had been friends with both Wright and Noguchi, our conversation ranged to include his thoughts on these other two modernists with Japanese sensibilities. He told me, “Russel was brilliant, very organized, and never lost his Hoosier accent. I saw him

again before he died. He was weeding in the woods.” About Noguchi, he said, “He had a masterful approach to landscape. Isamu would come and go; he worked all over. He designed abstractly, always thinking of height, density, silhouettes, shadows, forms that were smooth or jagged. His was total design, and he built models that are artworks in their own right. He would design a park without knowing about trees. I was sometimes his horticultural encyclopedia, his librarian. When he would come over with a design, I would help him find out what plants would work.”

The garden at LongHouse derives from Larsen's life as a collector of both craft objects and, now, monumental outdoor sculpture. He has helped promote the talents of younger artists and craftsmen, both ethnographic and contemporary, and to a large extent the garden is conceived, like the interior of LongHouse, as a series of galleries. In a tree-surrounded green lawn next to a bridge that carries the visitor to the entrance of the house from the top of a grass-covered berm (the berm was created from the sandy soil that was excavated when a large pond nearby was dug) stands a new acquisition, Takashi Soga's 2005 sculpture *Sea of the Ear-Rings*. It consists of two black steel circular bands, measuring fourteen feet in diameter, one standing on the ground at an angle and the other appearing to float horizontally from the point where it touches the apex of the first. Nearby is Buckminster Fuller's three-story-high *Fly's Eye Dome*, one of the architect's familiar truss-constructed hemispheres.

Now embedded in a mound of sand that is an extension of the berm bracing the bridge to the doorway is a series of tall and shimmering cobalt-blue rods by Dale Chihuly. I said that I preferred them as I had seen them formerly when, instead of resembling sentinels standing in front of the doorway, they had appeared as startlingly vivid, enormous reeds emerging from the pond. Larsen reasons, however, that placing artworks in fresh contexts makes one newly aware of them as presences rather than as mere ornaments in the garden.

For him, the act of creative imagination is indeed what counts (he says he maintains equanimity in the dentist's chair by dreaming up a new garden sequence), and it is as a continually evolving work-in-progress, an accretion of tree-and-shrub-bordered allées and hedge-enclosed rooms rather than according to a single overall plan, that Larsen has designed the LongHouse gardens. Like a museum director, he has left

certain garden spaces available for temporary exhibitions of borrowed works. *House*, a fifteen-foot-wide, eight-foot-tall fiberglass panel by Roy Lichtenstein, occupies one of these at present, and another hosts Louise Nevelson's monumental corten steel *Frozen-Laces-Four* (1976-80) on loan from the PaceWildenstein Gallery. Seven human-size bronze *Tree Man* figures by Toshiko Takaezu, a master ceramicist and sculptor, are placed like chess pieces on an apron of gravel enclosed by hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*) hedges. Larsen recently has installed an exhibition of several of her resonant bronze bells, which hang from brawny oak supports like the bells in a Shinto shrine.

As important for Larsen as making a setting for the collection of works by artists and craftsmen is the use of the garden as a series of showcases for his wide-ranging plant collection. But he never grows plants simply as specimens, choosing them instead for their sensory appeal and aesthetic effect within the overall landscape. Sounding like Russel Wright, he says, "Elegance has nothing to do with addition. Subtraction is everything. Color, texture, and form are my primary considerations." Few others would extol the color of "dried bracken ferns in the winter sun, with their play of 'moist' ribs against 'dry' frond tissue" or take note of the beauty of exfoliating barks, "the mottled olive greens of peeling sycamores and eucalyptus trunks." A grove of bamboo marks the entrance to the property where a towering allée of cryptomerias (*Cryptomeria japonica*) flanks the drive leading to the house. Elsewhere one finds blue Atlas cedars (*Cedrus atlantica* 'Glauca') and other conifers. There are numerous varieties of maples, Korean and Japanese cherry trees (*Prunus subhirtella* and *P. serrulata*), ornamental grasses, and daylilies. Normally, gardeners of great sophistication like Larsen avoid vivid reds, but he struck an unexpected and characteristically



*Study in Heightened Perspective* by Jack Lenor Larsen, Red Garden, LongHouse Reserve.

original bold note when he planted an allée of crimson azaleas, which he has reinforced on each side with an installation called *Study in Heightened Perspective*, a double row of scarlet-painted posts. These diminish in size as one looks down the allée, creating the optical illusion of greater-than-actual distance as they approach the terminus, which is marked by a Takaezu sculpture. In spring the grounds abound with his collection of two hundred different cultivars of daffodils. LongHouse Reserve, the not-for-profit organization Larsen created in 1991 to make the garden an educational institution, offers practical workshops for the public.

### Conclusion

Manitoga, the Isamu Noguchi Garden Museum, and LongHouse have or will outlive their creators. This raises an important issue: a garden is a living landscape, which by its nature is subject to time and change. Garden historians speak about a *genius loci*, "the genius of the place," as the innate character of a particular landscape, an inherent spirit that designers should

respect. What, though, is the case when the genius of the place is in fact both a place and a person, the individual whose restless creativity and untiring passion for his or her garden is responsible for its being an ever-changing work of landscape art?

This issue is endemic to historic preservation as a whole. Some historic preservationists might disagree, but to me it seems wrong to attempt to congeal the creativity of the past in a form that is reverentially static, one that inevitably denies the spirit of innovation and experiment that the geniuses who created the places discussed here surely would have continued to make, "next year" being every true gardener's favorite phrase.

What happens when those who cannot bear to see a great garden destroyed or lapse back into nature seek to perpetuate it in more or less the state of its appearance at the time of its creator's last intentions? When the garden is attached to a house that is historically or architecturally significant or when it becomes a means of honoring a person of great talent and distinguished reputation, it is natural that its future will be anticipated by its owner or secured by others. It is fortunate that the National Trust in Britain and the Garden Conservancy and various historic trusts in the United States seek to preserve special parks and gardens. However, because of the troubling issue just raised and the pressing need for funds and good management, the boards of trustees and the directors of institutionalized gardens face enormous challenges.

Manitoga, the Isamu Noguchi Garden Museum, and LongHouse are more than mere memorial landscapes. Even if they can never again be as exuberantly inventive as they were at the time of their creation, they are an important part of the long continuum of garden making. As such, they portray an important aspect of twentieth-century modernism and, in the case of these three, a frequently overlooked and often denied possibility within that movement: the garden as a synthesis of art *and* nature. Fortunately, their current trustees, curators, and managers are able to reckon with the inevitability of their change and to perpetuate them in ways that honor the design principles of their creators. Besides being of great value to landscape historians, all three of these gardens are places of refuge and delight for the appreciative public that is now able to enjoy them. — EBR

For information about visiting times and hours, go to:  
 Manitoga: [www.russelwrightcenter.org](http://www.russelwrightcenter.org)  
 Isamu Noguchi Garden Museum: [www.noguchi.org](http://www.noguchi.org)  
 LongHouse: [www.longhouse.org](http://www.longhouse.org)



## Contributors

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## Exhibitions

### *The Gates*

Central Park, February 12 through February 28, 2005

### Background

A quarter century ago the Bulgarian-born conceptual artist Christo and his wife Jeanne-Claude came to the Arsenal in Central Park, the headquarters of the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, to discuss their proposal to outline the park's entire circulation system of curvilinear paths with fifteen thousand “gates” from which would billow panels of saffron-colored fabric. Gordon J. Davis, whom then Mayor Edward I. Koch recently had appointed parks commissioner, was struggling to reform his moribund, dysfunctional agency. Notorious as a patronage parking lot for political paybacks, it was at the time virtually paralyzed by its disorganized, mismanaged bureaucracy. Worker morale and maintenance standards had fallen to an all-time low.

A decade earlier, Thomas Hoving, the soon-to-be-made director of the Metropolitan Museum, had had a brief, flamboyant career as parks commissioner. Referring to the civil unrest that had led to riots in other cities at that time, Hoving once told me, “Bread

and circuses. That's what we gave them. Bread and circuses.” This was also the Swinging Sixties, and Central Park, the 1860s masterpiece of landscape design created by Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux, had started hosting mass events: concerts, protest rallies, and “happenings.” Rules were suspended in that anything-goes happy heyday.

Hoving's boss, Mayor John Lindsay – handsome, idealistic, and managerially inexperienced – allowed a bloated municipal budget to bring the city to the brink of bankruptcy, a legacy that virtually disempowered his successor, Abraham Beame, as the banking community closed ranks and severely curtailed the city's

borrowing power. Now, with Ed Koch as mayor, New York City had weathered its fiscal crisis and obtained refinancing through bonds issued by the Municipal Assistance Corporation, a state-sponsored consortium of fiscal watchdogs. In the process, the Parks Department over which Davis presided was

targeted as a recipient of a continuing succession of budget cuts, and Central Park, the city's once-green heart, had become the haunt of drug dealers and the domain of muggers and graffiti artists, a symbol of its declining fortunes and dangerous reputation. Bare earth marked former lawns and meadows, and rat-attracting trash littered the ground. Broken lights and broken benches lined the paths of broken asphalt that Christo planned to overarch with *The Gates*. But Central Park's fame was still intact, and it



Christo and Jeanne-Claude

was this conspicuous center of Manhattan that the artist and his determined partner and wife Jeanne-Claude had made inalienably integral to the project's concept.

At the time of Christo and Jeanne-Claude's visit to the Arsenal, Commissioner Davis had just appointed me as Central Park administra-

tor, and we had begun to advance the then improbable notion of restoring Central Park's 843-acre degraded landscape while also reforming its day-to-day management. Our trinity of values – "Clean, Safe, and Beautiful" – constituted the mission statement of the Central Park Conservancy, the nascent not-for-profit public-private partnership we were forming when the artists appeared with their equally implausible proposal. In the face of their desire to use Central Park as their canvas, so to speak, we maintained that, degraded as it was, it was itself a great work of art.

Interestingly, Robert Smithson, widely considered to be the progenitor of land art, the category into which *The Gates* loosely fits, had said the same thing in his 1973 essay "Frederick Law Olmsted and the Dialectical Landscape." Smithson had come to understand that Central Park, dangerous and near-destroyed as it was then, was a great earthwork involving the excavation of swamps to create lakes and the movement of millions of cubic yards of topsoil to form rolling meadows and lawns. He saw how effectively Olmsted and Vaux had used the glacier-polished outcrops of Manhattan schist as elements in their design. "The magnitude of geological change is still with us, just as

it was millions of years ago," Smithson wrote. "Olmsted, a great artist who contended with such magnitudes, sets an example which throws a whole new light on the nature of American art."

In February 1981, Davis stated in the 107-page *Commissioner's Report* following the park agency's investigation of the desirability and feasibility of *The Gates* installation in Central Park: "Christo's project, if for no other reason than its sheer scale and demanding magnitude, must be evaluated first and foremost from a perspective mindful of Central Park's design and rich history, its precarious past and our hopes for its future. ... Might it not be better ... to expend the considerable energy that Christo has sought and required in consideration of a proposal whose principal objective is to improve Central Park directly – for example, components of a restoration master plan or a proposed park use policy – rather than one for which that purpose is only ancillary?" The permit for the project thus was denied.

Now, almost twenty-five years later, Central Park has been largely restored, and the Central Park Conservancy has become the role model for many similar public-

private park-support organizations throughout the nation. Under the current parks commissioner, Adrian Benepe, and the Central Park administrator and Conservancy president, Douglas Blonsky, it is a cynosure of the best park management practices.

In the same time interval Christo and Jeanne-Claude also have written their own success story. Their outdoor artworks have long ceased to be outsider art, even though in the sites where they take place they do generate the initial public opposition that is necessary to their success in the artists' eyes. Unlike the massive earthworks of Michael Heizer, James Turrell, and Charles Ross, which are taking these artists' lifetimes to build, Christo and Jeanne-Claude's work is not meant to rival the Egyptian pyramids in permanence. They are instead temporary public exhibitions that may take years to organize but are of only two-week duration. Their tangible long-term existence rests in the hundreds of preproject drawings Christo makes and sells to finance his projects and in the photographs and videotapes that document them both before and at the time they are installed.

The documentary filmmaker Albert Maysels has covered almost all of Christo's projects from inception to completion. His

footage relating to *The Gates* captures the first meeting with Davis and Parks Department officials in the Arsenal. Like his other Christo documentaries – *Floating Islands* in the Bay of Biscayne (1983), *Christo in Paris*, the wrapping of the Pont Neuf (1985), and *Wrapped Reichstag* in Berlin (1995) – it tells the story of the couple's persistence and final triumph after years of opposition. In the case of *The Gates*, on January 22, 2003, after the Central Park Conservancy's support was won after much arduous debate by its board of trustees and several meetings between the artists and Blonsky to establish the project's ground rules, Mayor Michael Bloomberg, who earlier had espoused the project when he was a Conservancy trustee, signed the permit that would allow *The Gates* to be installed two years later.

### **Making it happen**

Mayor Bloomberg's approval of *The Gates* meant that the plans previously developed by Christo and Jeanne-Claude's engineer, Vince Davenport, had to be perfected and all the components of the project fabricated. The most important difference between now and then, 1981, when the permit had been denied, was the set of strict

conditions required by the Parks Department and the Conservancy for the erection of *The Gates*. The original proposal called for fifteen thousand pairs of gateposts to be set directly in the ground and later filled with what was promised to be "clean dirt." The early drawings also show gates lining every single park path irrespective of overhanging tree branches or their intrusion into the park's woodland wildlife sanctuaries.

To ensure that the conditions set forth by the parks commissioner and the Conservancy could be met, Blonsky flew to Seattle to meet with Davenport and his wife Jonita, who serves as his partner in working out the specifications and logistics of Christo and Jeanne-Claude's projects. Blonsky says, "As soon as I met Vince I knew we could do business." Davenport felt the same way about Blonsky: "We couldn't have done the project without Doug and the Conservancy. We were blessed with that partnership."

The necessity of placing the posts on steel footings set on the asphalt edge of the paths rather than in the ground was quickly agreed upon. Davenport, Christo, Jeanne-Claude, Blonsky, and the director of Central Park Operations, Adam Kaufman, walked the park's entire pathway system. Wildlife-rich areas – the Ramble and

the North Woods – were declared off-limits, and wherever there was a stretch of path where a gate potentially would interfere with overhanging tree branches, an interruption of their regular spacing was mandated. The number thus was reduced from the fifteen thousand gates originally proposed to line fifty miles of pathway to 7,503 lining twenty-three miles. Davenport then prepared blueprints showing the position of every gatepost. According to Blonsky, "Walking the park and going out to Seattle to visit Vince developed the relationship. We synthesized our goals and developed a strong bond. It became a true collaboration, a challenge, something we knew we could do together."

"Challenge" is a word that Davenport likes. He has been working with Christo and Jeanne-Claude since 1989, when he helped engineer *The Umbrellas* that rimmed portions of the Pacific coastline in both California and Japan. The son of a general contractor who "could do anything," he enjoys exploring options and finding solutions to novel problems. Few of us consider how much conceptual artists, whose works are industrially fabricated and constructed by others, depend on the

design ingenuity of people like Davenport. Christo and Jeanne-Claude mastermind the political process that leads to the public acceptance of their projects, but it takes professionals who understand manufacturing and operations to actualize them. They must have imagination and patient creativity. As an example, it took Davenport three months to design one of the invisible components of *The Gates*. This was the eight-inch-square steel leveling plate cupping a central pivot ball that would allow the assembled gates to be tilted slightly one way or the other in order to make the posts perfectly plumb as they were being securely screwed into the base. In this way the gates would be uniformly upright whatever degree of incline the hilly park paths took.

Christo and Jeanne-Claude studied several mock-ups that Davenport erected on his own property in order to decide upon such things as the texture of the panels' fabric, its color, its dimensions, the fullness of the pleats to give the right amount of billowing in the breeze, and even the exact hem width. In March 2003, Davenport and his wife Jonita, who served as project director of *The Gates*, rented a Manhattan apartment and took up a two-year residency a few blocks from Central Park. He searched the city's

outer boroughs for a warehouse large enough to accommodate the assembly and fabrication of all the materials – steel bases, vinyl posts, nylon fabric, aluminum sleeves – and ended up renting a 25,000-square-foot space in Maspeth, Queens. Meanwhile, she managed the project's website and a database containing two thousand names of prospective helpers, eleven hundred of whom were subsequently hired. Many would-be workers applied via the Internet. The requests to sign up came from near and far. A number of applicants had worked on previous Christo projects. Some were themselves artists while others with regular jobs had decided this was an exciting way to spend a vacation.

At the same time that Jonita Davenport was screening and hiring the work force, her husband set about contacting manufacturers and suppliers, trying to find ones in as close proximity to New York City as possible in order to minimize trucking costs, an important consideration in this case because ten million pounds of material had to be delivered. He found a steel company outside Philadelphia that could make the footings, each of which weighed between 613 and 837 pounds, depending on size. The company agreed

to paint them a dark gray color to match the park's asphalt paths. A firm in Poughkeepsie was able to produce sixty miles of orange-colored vinyl, which was extruded from five-by-five-inch-square horizontal molds in eighteen-foot sections, for the stanchions and crossbars that would be assembled into gates. One million square feet sounds like a lot of nylon fabric, but this was too small an order for U.S. mills; Davenport therefore contracted with the same small mill in Germany that had manufactured the fabric for Christo and Jeanne-Claude's last three projects.

Workers in Davenport's temporary factory then cut the vinyl into sixteen-foot posts and crossbars of twenty-five varying lengths, ranging from five feet and six inches to eighteen feet, according to the path width particular sets of gates would span. They also produced the aluminum sleeves Davenport had designed to fasten the posts and crossbars together when they were assembled as gates in the park. A further design refinement called for the incision of a one-half-inch keyhole slot running the length of each crossbar from which the rolled fabric inserted in its hollow interior could be unfurled. The fabric was cocooned in a cardboard cylinder so that it would billow without wrin-

kles on the day *The Gates* was officially opened.

Davenport, a former boatswain mate in the U.S. Coast Guard, understands that a military organizational structure and meticulous management systems are necessary if objectives are to be efficiently carried out. Blonsky, who is much admired and respected by the Central Park work force as well as by his Conservancy and Parks Department colleagues, has the erect bearing of a military officer and an equal commitment to well thought out management strategies. Together they hammered out the schedule and logistics governing the delivery and distribution of three hundred truckloads of materials to the park prior to the first week in February 2005 when *The Gates* installers would begin assembly. Of equal importance was the advance plan-

ning necessary to train and deploy the 640 people who would be working during each week of the project. This meant developing a chain of command. The bottom rank consisted of installers, monitors (friendly "ambassadors" who interacted with the public after the gates were installed), and disassembly workers to take down the gates at the end of the sixteen-day exhibition. Each worker would be paid \$6.25 an hour and would be required to work a minimum of one week. They were divided into seventy-three eight-person teams overseen by twenty-one zone supervisors reporting to seven area leaders. Twenty-eight professional leaders, most of whom already were known to the Conservancy because they had previously managed events or film shoots in the park, acted as Davenport and Blonsky's lieutenant generals.

In the fall of 2004, with Davenport's plans showing every gate precisely placed and numbered, he and two helpers personally stenciled small green leaves and dots to mark where each set of gates would be placed on the asphalt paths. "I realized that arrows would arouse public concern, so I decided on the green maple leaf, which also has a point and is the logo of the Parks Department," he told me. "A leaf pointing in one direction indicated the beginning of a set of gates and another pointing in the opposite direction its end. The dots stenciled at twelve-foot intervals between the two markers showed the exact position of each gate." The length of a run was determined mostly by the Conservancy-mandated gate-free intervals where paths were overhung with tree branches.

The steel bases – a total of five thousand tons in weight – were delivered in December and stockpiled in the north end of the park. During the first week in January they were collected and distributed to various sections where they were picked up by forklifts and positioned with the proper spacing and alignment in accordance with the stencil marks on the paths. Bundles of stacked orange vinyl posts and crossbars were delivered to stations along the park's circuit drive.



On February 7, the installers who were to erect the 7,503 gates assembled at the Central Park Boathouse. Christo and Jeanne-Claude were there, as they were on every subsequent day throughout the duration of *The Gates*, to encourage the workers. Vans were ready to take each of the teams of eight and the area supervisors to their assigned sections of the park. Team captains, who previously had received a week-long training course, carried sets of plans showing the location and specifications for the slightly more than one hundred gates each team would install by the end of the week.

### The exhibition

It was fascinating to watch the speed and dexterity with which the teams of installers assembled the parts of each gate as if these were pieces of a giant erector set, positioning the posts on the leveling plates that had been fastened to the steel bases, fitting in place the aluminum sleeves holding the posts and crossbars together, raising and leveling the just-constructed monumental orange gate, and then tightening the bolts that held it in place. By opening day, February 12, in spite of a pre-

vious fifteen-inch snowstorm that had held up the execution of some of Davenport and Blonsky's carefully calculated logistics, *The Gates* exhibition was ready to be officially "opened" by Mayor Bloomberg. Workers were at their stations throughout Central Park. After the mayor, Christo, and Jeanne-Claude raised long poles with hooks on the end and snagged loops attached to the rolled-up fabric panels, releasing the Velcro that held them in place beneath the crossbar, the workers did the same, and the park quickly was filled with sinuous lines of billowing orange. By the next day, the hooks on the ends of the poles had been covered with tennis balls, and the teams of monitors that had replaced the installers were bumping back as necessary a curtain that had flipped over its crossbar. Their main function, however, was to serve as exhibition docents, answering questions and dispensing small squares of fabric to people seeking a souvenir. Their presence also ensured public order and deterred freelance entrepreneurs who might have wished to garner gates for sale on eBay. Vandalism of this sort would have been impossible in any case because of the throngs of gates-gazers walking everywhere throughout the park by day and also because of the sixty-person force of

security guards and police patrolling the park by night.

On February 28, the official closing day of the exhibition, disassembly crews began taking down the gates with the same organized efficiency with which the first teams of workers had installed them, a process that lasted until March 15. During this time park visitors were able to have a progressively truncated better-late-than-never viewing of *The Gates*. The steel bases, aluminum sleeves, vinyl posts, and fabric were put in separate dumpsters stationed along the park drives. All the material was now

ready to be removed from the park – the steel going to a recycling plant in Jersey City, the aluminum to one in Brooklyn, the vinyl and fabric to another in Pennsylvania. The show was over.

What, in fact, was *The Gates* when all was said and done? Was it an artwork or something else? Jeanne-Claude often said, "We did not do this as a gift to New York City. We did not do this for the park. We are artists. We did this for ourselves!" But both detractors and admirers had reservations about whether to call *The Gates* an artwork or an event. Perhaps the most frequent complaint of the former was the color: a bright orange

with a strong resemblance to the plastic material used to cordon off construction sites for safety reasons. The latter declared that *The Gates* had been a great thing for New York City. It had boosted citizen morale and been an economic and public relations shot in the arm for the city. Some people referred to the project as the big good event in comparison with the big bad event of 9/11, as if in some way the lingering notoriety of that catastrophe could be ameliorated by the buoyant mood engendered by *The Gates*. After all, smiling and well-behaved

crowds – 3.7 million people in all – had moved happily along twenty-three miles of park pathway, seeing parts of the park where they had never ventured before. The beautiful North End drew most of the praise, and I heard several longtime New Yorkers admit with chagrin that they had never before seen that part of the park.

For myself, I liked the curious visual dialogue, albeit unintended on the part of Christo and Jeanne-Claude, between the Olmstedian park and the one that they had temporarily transformed in such a striking way. With camera in hand like almost everybody else, I shot image after image of rippling orange fabric in juxtaposition with the park's rustic arbors, cast-iron bridges, and handsomely designed stone arches or as foreground or backdrop for prominent architectural features such as the Belvedere and Bethesda Terrace. I saw almost every corner of the park and often was drawn to the top of rock outcrops to get interesting views. I also liked watching how people dressed for the experience, many wearing some bit of orange apparel, such as a scarf or jacket.

It is perhaps useful to remember that Christo's concept for *The Gates* was born in the establishment-rejecting, countercultural





sixties and early seventies when Robert Smithson and other like-minded artists had adopted a strong anti-art-world stance. These artists, including Christo, stood at the threshold of a radical reinvention of the original terms of modern art, which had at the beginning of the twentieth century seemed already radical in its break with established conventions of pictorial composition and figurative representation. But Pablo Picasso and Henri Matisse, and later Jackson Pollock and Robert Motherwell, never dreamed of abandoning the studio, gallery, or museum or of giving up the use of traditional artists' materials – pen, chisel, brush, ink, paint, paper, canvas, clay, wood, stone, bronze.

Land artists, also called conceptual artists, working on the grand scale of nature rather than on the scale of the enclosed room, declared their emancipation from all art-historical convention as well as from the marketing of their works by dealers. Christo and Jeanne-Claude's intentions contain an element of the same bravado we find in Smithson's frequent use of the word "dialectical" as a means of setting up tension and opposition, a polarizing stance in which the breakaway independent artist is a heroic figure engaged in Herculean endeavors in spite of, or because of, their difficulty, cost, and initial public and governmental opposition. Ironically, Christo and Jeanne-Claude's is anything but outsider art in today's avant-garde-courting art world, and they have become celebrities with the ability to

self-finance their projects through the direct sale of Christo's drawings to collectors of contemporary art. With the Metropolitan Museum organizing a pre-installation exhibition and roof garden viewings during the time *The Gates* was up, their status as eminent contemporary artists was doubly certified.

The temporary nature of *The Gates*, like a gallery or museum exhibition with opening and closing dates, accounted for much of its success. Over and over I heard people say, "I was glad to see them come and glad to see them go." Often they added, "It's good to have the park back." The sixteen-day mass event could perhaps be thought of as a nostalgia-inspiring throwback to the period of its genesis more than twenty-five years ago. Yet there were differences. The era of radical unrest that had swept the country during the civil rights movement and the Vietnam War is over. The mass events in the park in the sixties and early seventies were hardly polite, nor were they even remotely as well managed or orchestrated as this one. Unlike the lawn-trampling crowds that attended the happenings of that period, further destroying the park's already severely bruised landscape, those who came to see *The Gates*

seldom strayed from the paths. Delight, not distress, was in the air.

### Conclusion

Still, the nagging question remains: "Was *The Gates* art or something else?" By the third week in March, not long after it had become merely an extraordinary memory, an erased inscription on the park's ever-evolving palimpsest, another event was set in motion. This time it was a universally welcomed annual one: the coming of spring. One could see the saffron stigmas in the center of the opening crocuses, and on an upper window pediment, just below the sheltering cornice of an apartment building on Fifth Avenue and 74th Street – after a contentious squabble precipitated by the removal and then, under intense public pressure, reinstallation of the supports for their twiggy nest – a famous pair of red-tailed hawks was again in residence. A telescope trained on the nest presented the spectacle of the male bird's dusky saffron-tinged feathers as he soared to a landing with food for his mate.

On March 27, Easter Sunday, Central Park was as thronged with visitors as it had been on any individual average day when *The Gates* was on view. I was one of them, and I too was glad to have the park "back" – as if it had ever gone away. – EBR

### Glasshouses: The Architecture of Light and Air

The New York Botanical Garden  
Curator: Dr. Therese O'Malley

Ideal conditions at the New York Botanical Garden have once again combined to produce a handsome and informative exhibition in the William D. Rondina and Giovanni Foroni LoFaro Gallery of the

LuEsther T. Merz Library with a fine catalogue. The curator, Dr. Therese O'Malley, a leading scholar of American garden and landscape history, has brought her depth of background to a focused study on the history of glasshouses, centered on the rich collections of the New York Botanical Garden.

Thematically organized cases begin with the first seventeenth-century publications illustrating sheds sheltering citrus trees. Increasing expanses of glass and the eighteenth-century invention of the glass roof eventually lead to the mid-nineteenth-century extravaganza of Joseph Paxton's



Crystal Palace and its American offspring. New materials and techniques advanced by the industrial revolution are shown to have revolutionized greenhouse design and manufacture.

Improved methods of heating and ventilation, skeletal cast iron frames, the manufacture of larger panes of cheaper glass, and new techniques of prefabrication – along with the repeal of taxes on glass – all

contributed to a surge in popularity of the glasshouse. This occurred on the grand scale at great estates and public winter gardens, and more modestly among many middle-class enthusiasts, the latter especially encouraged by new channels for marketing in magazine advertisements and sales catalogues, which are also exhibited.

This era of widespread popularity subsided only with the depression of the 1930s.

New architectural styles arose out of the unconventional medium of glass. Utilitarian function soon accommodated Chinese, rustic, Moresque, and classical features. Eventually the form itself came to express a new aesthetic: light, vaulted, flexible, and profoundly modern.



*Forcing Garden in Winter* by Humphry Repton, from *Fragments on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening*, 1816

And this aesthetic continued to evolve with the introduction of new materials such as steel and aluminum.

Unique to this exhibition are drawings from the archives of the Lord & Burnham Company, long the largest American manufacturer of greenhouses and conservatories. When Lord & Burnham closed in 1988, they gave their surviving archives to the New York Botanical Library. The National Endowment for the Humanities funded a conservation project which has produced a detailed catalogue: this will become available on-line later this year. Now for the first time, selected design drawings from this archive are presented to the public. These include plans for the conservatories of the United States Botanic Garden, various private estates, and for the New York Botanical Garden itself.

The catalogue for this exhibition is both enticing and enduring. Reproduced on the cover, a colored lithograph

depicts top-hatted and bus-tled admirers gathered around a flowering *Victoria regia* waterlily under a curved glass ceiling – one of the most striking images in the exhibition. The clearly written text informs and absorbs the general reader as well as the scholar. It merits a permanent place on any garden history bookshelf, filling a gap in presenting primary source material that illustrates and documents the development of glasshouses and gardens of exotic plants.

A great botanical garden is a particularly satisfying venue for such an exhibition. Leaving the Library, it is possible not only to stroll the grounds, but also to visit the new state-of-the-art Nolen Greenhouses for Living Collections, a superb coda to this presentation of rare books and prints.

The exhibition closes on August 14, to be followed by *Redouté: Artist for an Empire*, curated by Steven Sinou, with original artworks and correspondence by the artist, from October 21, 2005 to January 22, 2006.

– Elizabeth S. Eustis

## Books

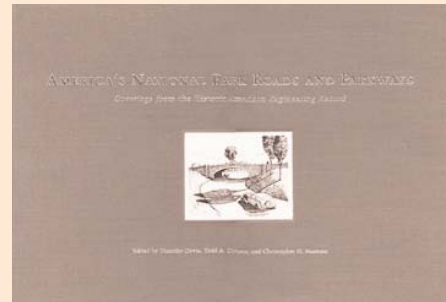
***America's National Park Roads and Parkways: Drawings from the Historic American Engineering Record***  
**Edited by Timothy Davis, Todd A. Croteau, and Christopher H. Marston**  
**With an introductory essay by Timothy Davis and a foreword by Eric DeLony**  
 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004)

Preserving scenic and historic places as public parks always has involved the application of technology and design in the physical and conceptual transformation of landscapes. Park development, in

other words, has been the means of preserving scenery and history for public health and enjoyment, and park roads – expensive, technically demanding, and sometimes controversial – have been the foundations of many park development plans.

Road building has been an essential part of what makes parks “public” for more than 150 years. Park making began as a private art, practiced mostly on the rural estates of British gentry. “Landscape gardening” soon proved adaptable to

other purposes, including the development of subdivisions and botanical gardens. However, the creation of “public” parks – not in the countryside but on the periphery of rapidly growing Victorian cities – demonstrated that this type of designed landscape, in particular, could structure profitable development schemes while it humanized the industrial metropolis. With municipal governments taking the role of enlightened landlords, public parks restored a kind of



*rus in urbe* for cities that had lost their connections to the natural world.

The extensive construction of roads and other circulation features distinguished public park landscapes from the earlier, private landscapes that inspired them. The pastoral scenery of a private park might have had a circuitous park drive, for example; but in New York City's Central

Park a hundred years later, most of the construction budget was spent on elaborate, highly engineered systems of carriage drives, pedestrian paths, and bridle trails. Circulation systems in Central Park made the rustic ideal of the “country in the city” possible, even for millions of visitors a year. It did so by employing some of the most advanced construction technology and roadway design then available. Structured patterns of circulation made it possible for the landscape park to become a public park since such engineering allowed the landscape to accommodate large crowds and recreational programs without losing its rural aesthetic appeal. Movement through the park was choreographed not just as a means of getting somewhere but as the principal mode of perception of a calculated sequence of “landscape effects.” The design of roads and other circulation features in Central Park (and soon in many municipal public parks) made movement as effortless and carefree as possible and allowed individuals to enjoy the emotional effects of scenery personally without interference from crowds of other individuals doing the same.

Park road design thus shaped public park design. This was as true in twenti-

eth-century American national parks as it had been in nineteenth-century municipal parks. One therefore might expect *America's National Park Roads and Parkways: Drawings from the Historic American Engineering Record*, an impressive portfolio of fourteen years of work researching and documenting historic national park roads by the editors, Timothy Davis, Todd A. Croteau, and Christopher H. Marston, to contribute not only to our knowledge of this specialized form of engineering but also to our understanding of the national park system as a whole. In fact, because of the foresight and skill of the teams of historians and delineators involved and because of the enormous scope and exhaustive nature of the entire project, this volume is among the most important ever produced on the history of the development of national parks.

The Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) and the Historic American Building Survey (HABS), related offices of the National Park Service (NPS), began the work presented in this portfolio in 1988. The Federal Highway Administration provided most of the

funding, motivated by its responsibility to research and document these scenic and historic roads, particularly at a time when many of them were more than fifty years old and needed rehabilitation. This partnership recalled the original “inter-bureau agreement” between the Bureau of Public Roads (the Federal Highway Administration’s predecessor) and the NPS, which since the 1920s allowed the parks agency to impose its own aesthetic considerations on national park road construction, while relying on the federal highway engineers to assure that the roads were practical, safe, and well built. Park roads built in the 1920s and 1930s, such as the Going-to-the-Sun Road in Glacier National Park, the Trail Ridge Road in Rocky Mountain National Park, and the Zion-Mt. Carmel Road in Zion National Park, are evidence of how successful this partnership was.

Federal parks and federal highways indeed have a long and intertwined history. In 1916, the same year Congress created the NPS, it passed the Federal Aid to Highways Act, initiating the federal commitment to highway funding. Stephen Mather, the first NPS director, began lobbying for a similar level of commitment to improve national park roads. Mather and his assistant, Horace

Albright, presented the modernization of the national park system as a necessary adjunct to the federal subsidization of the nation’s highways. They argued that the situation in the parks had become untenable because improved state highways made it easier to drive to national parks but not in them. Automotive tourists – in other words, the national park “public” – inevitably demanded not only improved roads but campgrounds, comfort stations, and other facilities. As federal aid to highways increased in the 1920s, NPS budgets also grew. During the New Deal, highway and park improvements ranked first and second, respectively, in total dollars spent on public works construction. The most profound implications of this association, however, came after World War II when in 1956 Congress passed the unprecedented Interstate Highway Act and the NPS responded the same year with its massive “Mission 66” redevelopment and expansion plan for the entire park system.

The legacy of national park roads so beautifully documented in *America’s National Park Roads and Parkways* mainly concerns the prewar “golden age” of

park road construction. These early automotive park roads replaced older wagon roads (where they existed), and while most were subsequently widened or altered in some way during the postwar era, many retained the integrity of their basic alignments and character dating to the 1920s and 1930s. In his introductory essay, NPS historian Timothy Davis, also one of this book’s editors, describes the interdisciplinary practice Mather called “landscape engineering,” in which landscape architects and engineers worked together to “harmonize” park roads with their settings. Davis was directly involved in the HABS/HAER project as a historian and as a supervisor, and he has published extensively on the history of American parkways. He describes the goal of “lying lightly on the land” (also the name of an exhibition Davis cocurated at the National Building Museum in Washington, D.C., in 1997), which implied building roads that minimized their presence while making at least some principal park attractions directly accessible by car. Ideally, park roads could be conceived, to use Charles Eliot’s words from the 1890s, as “mere slender threads of graded surface winding over and among the huge natural forms of the ground.” But again this rustic ideal was achieved

through the most advanced engineering and design available. While national park bridges were carefully veneered in stone or brick, those finishes covered reinforced concrete construction. Roads were kept narrow and aligned to minimize the extent of construction scars, but they also were laid out with spiral transition and superelevated curves. While guard walls were built of stone (usually native material that had been excavated during construction) and featured crenellated or naturalistic profiles, they also were vital for safety in an era when significant numbers of faster cars were on the road.

National park roads were designed for lower speeds (often around thirty-five miles an hour), but this was an intentional limitation. The roads were conceived, again, not just as transportation but also as a mode of experience, and that goal would have been undermined by high-speed highway engineering. Long tangents, or straight sections, were assiduously avoided, and curves were calculated to produce a sequence of views. Sequence demanded variety, and so roads were designed to curve into forest cover and

out again; to rise up to ridge tops but return down into valleys; and to exploit awesome views but as part of dramatic progressions. This was an art of park road design that had its origins in the nineteenth-century but, as Davis points out, was particularly influenced by contemporary automotive parkway and scenic highway design, such as the Bronx River Parkway and the Columbia River Gorge Highway, both of which are included in this portfolio, which greatly enhances its scholarly interest and usefulness.

The scope of the fourteen-year HABS/HAER effort makes this volume a landmark not only of American national park history but of the growing field of cultural landscape research, analysis, and documentation. Scores of HABS/HAER summer interns did most of the research and drawings that constitute the final results. Working in or near dozens of national parks, national parkways, national military parks, and other sites, they produced 476 large-format, beautifully drawn and composed sheets of measured and analytic drawings, as well as thousands of pages of written history. Large-format photographs completed the careful documentation of roads in Acadia, Glacier, Great Smoky Mountains, Rocky Mountain, Shenan-

doah, Yellowstone, Yosemite, and Zion national parks, to name just a few examples. The Blue Ridge, Colonial, and Natchez Trace parkways also are included in this book, as are the Gettysburg and Shiloh national military parks, among others. Hundreds of the HABS/HAER drawings are reproduced in an eleven-by-seventeen-inch format. Originally drawn in black ink on mylar paper, the drawings usually feature several plans, sections, axonometric, and “peel-away” analytic views; and sometimes lengthy passages of text provide background. Done to the famous documentary standards developed by HABS since the 1930s, the original drawings are now part of the massive HABS/HAER archives conserved at the Library of Congress.

Many of the drawings that make up *America’s National Park Roads and Parkways* do not illustrate their subjects as much as they analyze and elucidate them. The project’s supervisors were aware that technical drawings of bridges and other roadway structures alone would not adequately document the historical significance of this design heritage. Eric DeLony, in charge of the HAER program, describes in his foreword how by the

third year of the effort the participants had “begun to conceptualize the documentation process in broader terms as a means of recording both engineered structures and the broader landscapes in which they were situated.” The documentation of park roads broadened into a unique and influential analysis of the cultural landscape of national park frontcountry. Davis further explains how the documentation process evolved from an early emphasis on bridges and tunnels to a broader interest in “highway engineering, landscape design, environmental perception, ecology, and cultural history.” The transformation “reflected both the inherent complexity of park road environments and the growing influence of interdisciplinary cultural landscape studies. . . . New conceptual strategies and more creative methods of graphic representation were needed to convey the complex spatial, temporal, and experiential aspects of park roads and parkways.” As their park road project developed, the HABS/HAER teams acknowledged the significance of park roads not only for access but also as the principal modes of perception in many parks; as medi-

ations between the natural and cultural resources of the national park system and the ever more numerous, more automotive American public. The HABS/HAER park road history developed into park history, greatly increasing the interest and value of the entire project.

This broadening interest, from the park road to the entire designed landscape corridor and even to the larger park landscape (at least as perceived from the road), is evident in many of the individual projects presented in this book. Some of the best examples illustrate how far documentary techniques progressed and make this portfolio an important record of both history and methodology. The Great Smoky Mountains National Park researchers, for example, depicted the evolution of that park’s road patterns and road design principles over time and put them in the context of changing construction and automotive technologies. The “motorist experience” was analyzed as were typologies of stonework, guard walls, and bridges. Some parks were visited twice. At Yellowstone, the initial catalogue of roads and bridges in 1989 was supplemented by a second study, “Yellowstone Roads: A Cultural Landscape,” in 2000. This second study developed into a complete graphic and historical analysis of the Yellowstone front-

country. This included sheets on “Experiencing Wonderland,” describing the overall experience of an automotive tourist in the park, which was of course structured by the park’s famous Grand Loop road system. Again, the evolution of both the pattern and technology of road construction was diagramed with great effect. A typology of roadside development – entrance stations, interpretive waysides, scenic overlooks – was documented, and the larger landscape of Yellowstone itself was examined as a series of visual character zones as experienced from the park’s road system.

The Yellowstone road documentation and several other projects like it, including the Yosemite and Glacier projects, make this volume a unique record of an evolving methodology of cultural landscape analysis and documentation. As published here, the results are beautiful as well as significant. The shortcomings of the project were inevitable consequences of the original mandate and sponsorship of the entire effort. With the Federal Highway Administration acting as client and NPS professionals and interns doing the work, there was perhaps a limit as to how far into cultural landscape research the teams

could go while still faithfully documenting the physical roads for the client’s regulatory purposes. The rigorous documentation standards for the HABS/HAER archives at the Library of Congress also dictated that the final results consist of ink drawings composed on large-format mylar sheets, a medium in which the delineators were masters but which also restricted them to conventional drawing techniques.

*America’s National Park Roads and Parkways* also is intended primarily as a graphic record; therefore, one must still travel to the Library of Congress to consult the thousands of pages of history produced by the project’s writers. The introductory essay by Davis, while informative, is too brief. It would have behooved this scholar and editor to give more room to further explore the legacy so richly presented graphically. The history of national park roads, as Davis points out, is a history of the national parks as cultural landscapes. Park roads did not just “lie lightly on the land,” they became the mode of perception for generations of twentieth-century automotive park visitors. Through advanced engineering, they enabled an experience of a rustic ideal; however, this was not a paradox as much as a well-established cultural tradition.

During the postwar era, Mission 66 widened many of these roads and sometimes degraded the calculated emotional experience of landscape they were intended to achieve. The subject of park roads became more controversial than ever as a new landscape ideal, wilderness, increased in appeal and in some ways supplanted the ideal of the public park. The difference was a simple one: wilderness was defined, in law as well as in common usage, as a roadless area. Without roads, wilderness also would have few people and thus would never truly be a public park, at least in the sense that the great nineteenth-century landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted and his followers at the NPS would have understood.

These are inquiries perhaps for another book, but they are questions that go unasked in *America’s National Park Roads and Parkways*. Still, if this book was not intended to look into all the broader cultural issues associated with national park roads, it nevertheless offers an impressive record of one of the most ambitious and successful graphic inventories of its type ever undertaken. – Ethan Carr

*Away Out Over Everything: The Olympic Peninsula and the Elwha River*

By Mary Peck  
Essay by Charles Wilkinson  
(Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004)

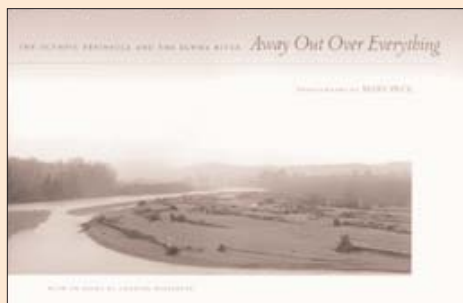
Photography began as an imitation of sight, but almost immediately the imitator became teacher: the photographs we look at partly teach us how to see. It is a subtle business and never just one way. We photograph what we notice, and as a society, looking at photographs, we silently acquire a vocabulary of what is deemed to be noticeable. Just as writing in all its forms – newspapers, novels, advertising, work jargon, and poetry – shapes and is shaped by the way we speak, so photography both reveals and forms our visual language.

You see this mutual influence in the way picture postcards and picture windows reinforce each other. They capture the beauty of landscapes in ways that allow it to be packaged and consumed, perhaps by means of a fifty-cent card, perhaps by a trophy home. Usually the assumptions that go into composing such a picture support a familiar range of choices: they combine bold expanses with vivid hues as though space and color were a pair of cymbals slamming together. Calendars and so-called coffee-table books generally address the same



set of expectations. They show us how nature is “out there,” or, to be more exact, they show us what we think nature “out there” ought to be.

Images that show something new or that recast the



familiar in new terms are by definition rare. The tale is told of a Buddhist monastery nestled in a favored location at the foot of Mt. Fuji, the icon of Japan. The mountain, splendid and graceful, towered above the monastery, but by conscious decision, a wall was constructed around the cramped courtyard obstructing all views. Only when the visitor, feeling thirsty, proceeded to the oaken water barrel in a shaded corner of the palisade, drew the cedar ladle from its hanging place, and leaned forward over the barrel to dip the ladle in and sip the cool water, only then did the visitor, who had inadvertently assumed the posture of bowing, notice a narrow slot in the palisade, very close at

hand, and through it glimpse Fuji, snowcapped, regal, and perfectly framed.

I think of that story when I see the photographs of Mary Peck because they pack a similar surprise followed by a similar sense of recognition. Each image startles, and yet one quickly assents, “But, of course.” And then the feeling begins that one’s eyes are widening, that the pictures speak a rich, new, and personal language,

and that what is being said has never been said exactly this way before.

The several dozen duotones of Peck’s collection, *Away Out Over Everything: The Olympic Peninsula and the Elwha River*, take us on a journey inland from the coast of Washington’s Olympic Peninsula, through cutover lands, into the old-growth wilderness of the peninsula’s heart, and back again to the sea. Only in the clear-cuts do we sense the presence of history; elsewhere, we are caught between the fleeting moment of the photograph and the timelessness of primordial forest and ocean. In one view, the surface of the river churns with spawning salmon; in another a flood has just washed the sandbar clean; in still another light is falling just so, like a tunnel

descending through the trees; and in another a deer stands alert, about to bolt, far down the clearing. Each moment is as transient as a sip from a cedar ladle, but behind each one, the numinous, brooding landscape, like Fuji, stands vigil.

In Peck’s photographs it is not the moment that is caught but the viewer. Somehow she seems to be looking at the landscape from the inside, and she enables us to look at it that way, too. We see no lofty peaks framed against the sky nor flower-dappled meadows; we see none of the visual phrases that have become familiar and trite because of overexposure elsewhere. Instead, we feel ourselves afoot in the landscape, suddenly peering at a riverbend through a screen of alder branches or blocked in our expectation of seeing the ocean by an ungainly pile of logs and sea wrack that, upon contemplation, begins to seem architectural and even soulful. The trumpets of full sun never blare; we are nearly always in the quiet, private half-light of shadow, dawn, and dusk. In each instance the moment that catches us feels lived and personal, not borrowed from warehouse stock.

Part of what brings sensory immediacy to Peck’s work is the shape of her pictures. The format is panoramic, a horizontal rectangle stretched wide. Peck uses a Fujika camera because, she says, “The format feels like what I see when I am walking.” There’s good reason for this, which you can verify yourself. If you stare at a fixed point, never moving your eyes, and trace in the air the boundary of what you see, including all of your peripheral vision, the shape you trace will be wide and relatively flat. Its proportions will more nearly approximate the frame of a Fujika panorama than a 35-mm negative or, still less, the



negative of a 4x5 view camera or similar systems. Peck’s format deemphasizes the idea of a central subject and plunges us into the act of broadly seeing. It makes our peripheral view as important as what we see straight ahead, and the livening of our peripheral sight energizes our awareness. We feel the buzz of a higher alert-

ness when we try to absorb everything there is to see, from far left to far right. This is how we walk in the woods – or should. We feel more alert, more silent, readier for the next revelation of forest or river or shore. William Stafford captures this prowling, nerve-twitching spirit in “Atavism,” the marvelous poem that provides the collection’s title:

For delicious minutes you can feel your whiskers  
Wider than your mind,  
away out over everything.

While Peck’s photographs have the scale and sweep of what we see when we are genuinely alert, they are not quite what our eyes can show

us. Her exposures are long enough that the ripple at the river’s edge blurs into a languid brushstroke and the spray from a crashing wave lingers like smoke. At the left of one view, gulls stand in

profile on a sandbar, but forward in the colony, as our eyes move to the right, other gulls are leaping into flight, their wings dissolving with motion. Still others, farther forward, have gained speed, and their whole bodies, ghostlike, rise and melt into the hazy air. Peck’s technique lengthens the duration of what we experience as the present. The stolen moment is not frozen and perfect, forever preserved. Instead, it evanesces. We feel it expire before our eyes. Peck’s landscapes embrace the change and dynamism of actual nature, which means that death is present, literally and metaphorically. She shows us spawned-out salmon, lethar-

gic and soon to die, elk antlers half-buried in flood cobble, and the carcasses of uprooted trees, abandoned by floodwaters, all lying at the same angle, like graves in a cemetery.

Peck’s black-and-white images convey an elegiac spirit, but, aside from several beautiful (yes, beautiful)

views of clear-cuts, they are not rueful. It is as though they have allowed us to look in on a series of ancient ceremonies, none of which we fully understand nor need to. Rather, we feel privileged to have glimpsed a reality that exists just as it must. But in a way, Peck has deceived us again. She almost convinces us that the chromatics of the world begin and end with the rich blacks, subtle grays, and strong bright highlights of these images. In the world she has conjured, color seems no longer to exist.

A word about the book-making: the duotone reproductions are very fine, and the details of sequencing, organization, and design, in their nearly perfect invisibility, impart to the book an enviable aesthetic coherence. Readers, as well as “lookers,” have much to enjoy. The book includes an essay by Charles Wilkinson, one of the West’s finest writers and foremost interpreters. Wilkinson sketches the historical circumstances that led to the damming of the Olympic Peninsula’s greatest river, the Elwha, and to the demise of the river’s legendary salmon runs. Too often such accounts offer little but nostalgia for a perished, Edenic past. Not here. Barring reversal of present federal plans, removal of the Elwha’s dams should begin in 2008. – William deBuys

**Revisiting The Gamberaia: An Anthology of Essays on Villa Gamberaia**

**Edited by Patricia J. Osmond**  
(Florence: Centro Di and Luigi Zalum, 2004)

Anyone who has climbed the hill in Settignano to visit Villa Gamberaia, walked along the grassy terrace to see the view overlooking Florence, and then discovered the surprising elements of the place – the water

parterre, the cypress arcade, the bowling green washed with sun, the upper-level garden with its *limonaia* terrace, and the ancient cypresses towering above the grotto – anyone who has seen these sights, this rare combination of architecture and foliage, knows that this is one of the most beautiful villas in Italy.

As we read *Revisiting The Gamberaia: An Anthology of Essays on Villa Gamberaia*, edited by Patricia J. Osmond, we learn that many visitors in the past have agreed with this opinion. To Edith Wharton, La Gamberaia was “probably the most perfect example in Italy of great effect on a small scale.” Harold Acton claimed, “Its nostalgic charm haunted my imagination since childhood.” H. Inigo Triggs said, “It would be difficult to find in Italy a more interesting garden of its class.” Janet



Ross talks of Princess Ghyka restoring the old-fashioned garden so that its “pristine splendor” is revived.

In her anthology of essays by eight British and American writer/observers

between 1901 and 1973, Osmond, a Renaissance historian, adds to the delight of readers, whether they are students of architecture and garden design, armchair amateurs doing research for an impending trip, or returned tourists recalling a pleasant visit. Besides the essays, which document a range of reactions, there are other dimensions to this book. It provides a history of the villa, evocative photographs and prints showing it in different stages of its existence, and a sense of the social life of the Italians and expatriates who frequented it.

We are told by Osmond that the 1901 essay by Ross “opened up a whole new field of research and writing.” Ross gives both her per-

sonal observations and the historical evidence she found in Florentine archives. Wharton’s 1904 description shows the novelist’s strong personal reaction to place, her excellent descriptive powers, and her knowledge of the Italian villa genre, with its use of light and shade and subdivisions of space. Her keen observations are delivered with that tone of authority Wharton naturally assumed. Evelyn March Phillipps’s account, published by *Country Life* in 1905, was included in a two-volume folio edition with photographs by Charles Latham of some thirty-five villas in and near Rome. Her description is lively and combines personal reactions with information on the villa’s previous and current owners. A number of Latham’s excellent photographs are included here.

From Triggs in 1906 we get an architect’s reaction. He knew the importance of supplementing photographs with a survey drawn from scale. The 1915 observations of landscape architect Henry Hubbard and the 1927 drawings of architectural student Geoffrey Jellicoe are from a similar structural perspective. There is a hiatus until 1961 when we have the post-World War II descriptions of Georgina Masson, a prolific writer on Italian architecture and history, and Acton, himself the owner of a nearby villa then in need of restora-

tion. These last two writers comment on the revival of the villa by the Marchi family after it had been occupied and then burned by the Germans at the end of World War II.

A number of mysteries about La Gamberaia are touched on and partly resolved. Its history had been somewhat elusive when these writers, beginning with Ross in 1901, visited it, explored its origins, and began to date the important events in the evolution of its form. We now know that the Gamberaia gardens were laid out in the early seventeenth century by a Florentine noble, Zanobi Lapi, and his family. The next century saw garden statuary, fountains, and a parterre added by the Marchese Capponi. Osmond also enlightens us about Princess Ghyka, its early-twentieth-century owner, who made the important alteration that, although controversial, gives this particular villa a unique charm, namely, its hedge-bordered pools of water in place of the former floral parterre.

The Renaissance art connoisseur Bernard Berenson, who lived nearby at Villa I Tatti, called the princess “a mysterious being” and goes on to describe a game of charades at La Gamberaia in which the English expatriate writer Vernon Lee took part.

The princess’s companion, Florence Blood, studied Greek with Berenson. From such facts and anecdotes we can assemble a picture of the lives of the aesthetes, intellectuals, and aristocrats that formed Florence’s expatriate colony.

*Revisiting The Gamberaia* is visually rewarding. We are greeted at the beginning with a stunning color image by the architectural photographer Balthazar Korab that shows the situation of the villa on its hill overlooking Florence. At both the front and back of the book are black-and-white photos by Korab as well as many illustrations throughout, including several that accompanied the original writings.

Osmond is correct in saying that the essays “not only preserve the impressions of the past but invite new reflections and stimulate fresh interpretation.” They “communicate the beauty of the place in an incomparable prose – with a simplicity and clarity, elegance and charm, that make reading about the gardens as enjoyable, in a different way, as experiencing them in person.”

The only complaint one may have with *Revisiting The Gamberaia* is its lack of page numbers. This aside, it is a valuable addition to garden history scholarship portraying the reception of this remarkable villa over nearly four centuries.

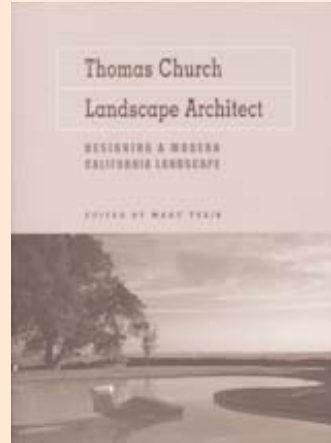
– Eleanor Dwight

**Thomas Church, Landscape Architect: Designing a Modern California Landscape**  
Edited by Marc Treib

(San Francisco: William Stout, 2003)

The works and words of Thomas Dolliver Church (1902-1976) have had a more pervasive influence on the structuring of the twentieth-century domestic garden than is commonly recognized by

members of his profession, not to speak of the general public, which isn't very good at remembering the names of American early modernist gardens or their creators. True, his seaside garden for the Martins at Aptos and his swimming pool complex for the Dewey Donnells in Sonoma, California, usually are recognized as icons of modern garden design, even by those at a loss for the landscape architect's name. But in a forty-eight-year career Church is said to have designed more than two thousand gardens of which only a limited number have the visual punch of these



two masterpieces. Fortunately, both have been preserved and are well maintained.

In a way the visual excitement of the Martin and Donnell gardens with their clear relation to modern art obscures the fundamental qualities that made Church's designs both groundbreaking and popular. In *Thomas Church, Landscape Architect: Designing a Modern California*

*Landscape*, editor Marc Treib and his fellow essayists, Dorothee Imbert, Daniel Gregory, and Dianne Harris, perform a great service in teasing out these qualities and exploring the reasons why his gardens became models for suburban garden design in and far beyond the state of California. The essays grew out of a symposium held to celebrate the acquisition of Church's papers by the Environmental Design Archives of the University of California at Berkeley, where Treib is a professor of architecture. Valuable for scholars, a short piece by archivists Waverly B. Lowell and Kelcy Shepherd at the end of the book describes the contents of the Church papers.

As Treib says in his introduction, "No single symposium, no single book, can fully cover the ideas and accomplishments of Thomas Church." Still, this book touches all of the important bases in a thoughtful and readable way. There is some biographical information mostly concerning the landscape architect's early years. His working methods are examined as are his books and his magazine articles. Quotations from colleagues and clients give a sense of his personality. And, most rewarding, a rich assembly of plans and photographs – many never before published – documents Treib's evaluation of Church's design development over the course of his professional life.

Two major characteristics appeared early in Church's career: his careful attention to each individual site, its topography, soil, vegetation, wind, and water; and his deep interest in the possibilities and requirements of outdoor living. In addition to his own studies at the University of California at Berkeley and at the Harvard Graduate School of Design, Dorothee Imbert considers Church's European tour as a Sheldon fellow prior to his master's thesis as an important formative influence. He was much taken with the

relationships between buildings and gardens in the villas of the Italian Renaissance, in the Moorish palaces of Spain, and in the traditional farms and villages of southern Italy. These, she notes, he looked at with the eyes of a twentieth-century Californian. Coming from a similar climate, Church drew lessons from the transitions between indoor and outdoor living spaces and from the management of sun and shade and water, and he would adapt many of these techniques in his own design strategies. Function was primary, although he was not impervious to stylistic features. Church remained fascinated with the classic geometrically organized parterre and with geometric forms in general. Imbert suggests, with good reason, that the zigzag edges that appeared in his gardens from time to time had their origin in the 1924 Tachard Garden in Neuilly. She also notes his increasing use of free-form curves after his 1937 meeting with Alvar Aalto on a trip to Scandinavia.

The gardens Church designed in the thirties, forties, and early fifties established his reputation as a landscape architect of modernity, and later in his career, when he drew less on this part of his vocabulary, he was accused of backsliding into traditionalism. This misses the point. Both

Imbert and Treib make clear that he was no theorist. His modernism was a matter of attitude. He had absorbed from modern art the realization that there were many ways to organize the ground plane attractively without axial symmetry. Nevertheless, he did not reject the past. Elements might be derived from Renaissance and Baroque gardens but they were combined to create comfortable outdoor spaces, often with an unexpected twist. When a plain rectangular swimming pool or an apparently symmetrical axial plan best suited the clients' desires and the architecture of the house, he employed them without hesitation. At the same time, his use of symmetry was not rigid – existing trees might well be kept, and the two sides of an axis might harmonize in scale but differ in detail. On the ground, plantings softened gardens that in plan look quite rigid.

Church often said that "gardens are for people," and that is the title of his best-known book. What did he mean? He was a truly gifted designer with a broad knowledge of landscape history and an arsenal of forms and patterns in his head, but his answer early in that book sets out the core of his philosophy:

The owner who is to use and pay for the garden must be heard. Any tendency to design for the design's sake, to create a pattern within which the owner must live according to rules set by the designer, is headed for frustration, if not disaster.

The garden for him was at once a room that extended the house into the outdoors and a space for the relaxed enjoyment of nature. Church acknowledged that the idea had a long history but felt that contemporary conditions called for new solutions. Gardens should be designed to serve the present needs and interests of their owners as well as permitting some adjustment as needs and interests changed. Some clients' needs and wishes were quite complex if not contradictory, and Church's ability to forge them into an intelligent, functional, yet beautiful design for a usually quite limited space was remarkable.

As he did, landscape architects generally start out making small gardens. Then, if successful, they move on to larger projects and leave the small garden behind. Not Thomas Church. He eventually did take on some estates and larger commercial and institutional projects, but small- and medium-sized suburban gardens remained the core of his practice. His

office was never very large but it attracted a talented staff, many of whom went on to major careers in landscape architecture. Treib as well as several of his contemporaries speculate that he was uncomfortable with the endless meetings and committee indecision that often mark large public works.

The accessible scale of his projects, his ability to express his ideas clearly and simply, and his understanding of the power of the press as well as its needs brought Church wide publicity. Through his longtime association with *Sunset* magazine, recounted by Daniel Gregory, he can be called the principal generator of the California gardens seen and admired by GIs going to and coming from the Pacific theater during World War II. Those who didn't move to California after the war tried to re-create those gardens all over the United States. Every small American backyard that boasts a deck, a swimming pool, and/or a barbecue grill can be said to owe them to Thomas Church. We still hanker after those backyard swimming pools even if we live in a part of the country where they are unusable much of the year.

Abetting the nationwide spread of his ideas was the close working relationship

he formed with *House Beautiful* magazine in 1946 and with its editor, Elizabeth Gordon, which lasted until 1965. According to Dianne Harris, he "helped make modernism in the garden comfortable and accessible" with his articles and the images of his landscape designs. In his articles and in his books – *Gardens Are for People* (1955) and *Your Private World* (1969) – Church addressed himself to lay readers in friendly, concise paragraphs and in brief captions for a multitude of photographs. Harris makes the important point that these are not how-to books. Church's aim was to advance the profession of landscape architecture by creating an informed public that would understand the value of the profession's expertise. She does admit that many readers probably used his books as a source of ideas without always understanding that successfully required training that they might not have. But they also quickly became a must-study for landscape architecture students. *Gardens Are for People* is still in print in a third edition.

Perhaps the most important reason for Church's influence, as Treib says in his introduction, is that he was the right landscape architect for his times. In the prosperous decades after World War II, a whole new generation of homeowners grew up, many

of them new to the notion of suburban living. Even the prewar elite, used to relying on professional gardeners, found that they preferred smaller and more easily manageable gardens. Church and his fellow modernists – Garrett Eckbo, Dan Kiley, James Rose, and Larry Halprin, among others – showed their contemporaries that it was possible to have attractive as well as functional surroundings without spending enormous amounts of time gardening. They proposed expanding decks and terraces instead of flowerbeds. As is usually the case with a truly innovative approach, not all the results were positive – a consequence not examined by the authors. For a while the very idea of gardening or planting a yard went out of fashion. With the right choice of plants it was easy in California to have a satisfactory amount of greenery in minimum space with minimum care. However, it is not so easy in many parts of the United States. In the hands of untrained – and untalented – imitators, charmless paved backyards with barbecues, slides, and sandboxes along with a few pots of geraniums for decoration proliferated. Not until the late 1970s did horticulture and its rewards resurface in the popular imagination.

Some of Church's designs do seem dated today. Although carrying on his legacy, contemporary designers have worked out different and often more subtle modern landscapes to limit maintenance. But they still face the issues that Church addressed, and the different solutions he proposed for those issues are still worth studying. To list all of them would take more words than this review. Fortunately, we now have *Thomas Church, Landscape Architect* to describe them and place them in context. – Denise Otis

**"The Busiest Man in England": A Life of Joseph Paxton, Gardener, Architect & Victorian Visionary** by Kate Colquhoun (Boston: David R. Godine, Publisher, 2005)

Long before Joseph Paxton (1803–1865) was knighted for his labors on the Crystal Palace in 1851 and many years before the publication of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859), the paths of these two brilliant men crossed. Not that they met face-to-face. But as Kate Colquhoun

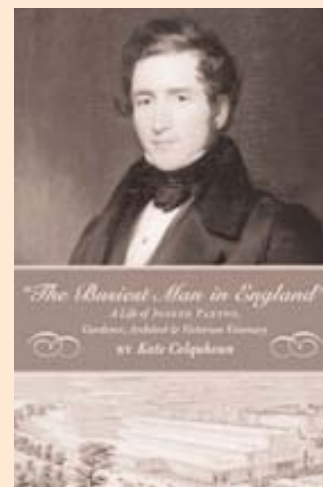
notes in "*The Busiest Man in England*", Darwin visited Chatsworth, seat of the duke of Devonshire, in 1845 and was impressed by the Great Stove, Paxton's vast curvilinear hothouse built of wood, iron, and glass. Inside, among rare and exotic plants, birds, and fish from around the world, Darwin found a remarkable simulation of tropical nature near a water feature. After nearly five years as a naturalist aboard the HMS *Beagle* in the South Pacific, he had some basis for judging Paxton's tropical scenery a success. "Art beats nature altogether there," Darwin wrote.

Colquhoun does not linger over Darwin's remark, but that notion – art beats nature – is illuminating. The great naturalist generally is associated with the evolution

of species, the struggle for existence, life as incessant war, and the survival of the fittest (or of the fit). And yet, in *The Unexpected Universe* (1969) and other books, Loren Eiseley reminded us that Darwin

did not ground his ideas on evolution, or natural selection, in deadly conflict alone – even though many of his contemporaries were "obsessed by struggle." Pondering the immense journey of the human species down through the ages, Eiseley thought of other factors at work: cooperation, compassion, love, artistic expression. Still, during the period of Paxton's rise from obscure beginnings in nineteenth-century Britain – a time of rapid industrialization, dislocation, extraordinary social mobility, and insecurity – some struggle and competition may have seemed unavoidable. Amid conflicting loyalties, someone, something would triumph. Another would fail or be neglected. In any event, Darwin's notion of art "beating" nature sheds a harsh light on the wider context of Paxton's endeavors. Meanwhile, Colquhoun remains focused on Paxton himself, an ingenious and charming gardener/engineer who was driven to compete against the greatest buildings, gardens, and botanical collections of any age, past or present.

To those who have studied the architecture, town planning, and landscape gardening of nineteenth-century Britain, some aspects of Paxton's life are familiar: his humble birth in 1803 in Bedfordshire, England, the son of a farmer or farm



laborer; his work as a gardener at a few country places and at the Horticultural Society's garden at Chiswick, near London; his service of more than thirty years to William George Spencer Cavendish, the sixth duke of Devonshire, mainly at Chatsworth in Derbyshire but also at other properties of the duke in England and Ireland; his skills as a plant propagator, inventor, horticultural journalist, and designer of houses, gardens, parks, a village, and a cemetery; and his design of the Crystal Palace, erected in London's Hyde Park for the Great Exhibition of 1851. Less known, perhaps, are Paxton's efforts as an astute businessman; as an outspoken Liberal member of Parliament; as a visionary planner of sewer systems and a glass-enclosed circumferential boulevard for metropolitan London; as an advocate for the rights and well-being of ordinary people; and as a husband and father torn between family attachments and loyalty to his employer. Americans may know of Paxton mainly because the park he designed for a new suburb of Liverpool at Birkenhead caught the attention of the young Frederick Law Olmsted on his first visit to England in

1850 before Olmsted had any thought of designing public parks in the United States.

An attractive subject, Paxton is known generally through facts and images found in short monographs, exhibition catalogues, histories, and studies of the Crystal Palace, as well as through two standard works – *Paxton and the Bachelor Duke* (1935), a biography written by his granddaughter, Dr. Violet Markham, and George F. Chadwick's *The Works of Sir Joseph Paxton, 1803–1865* (1961). Students of planning and design will turn to Chadwick for more technical details of certain projects and a more objective discussion of Paxton's contributions to their fields, set against the contributions of his predecessors – “Capability” Brown, Humphry Repton, John Nash, and John Claudius Loudon – and contemporaries – Isambard Kingdom Brunel, George and Robert Stephenson, A. W. N. Pugin, Sir Charles Barry, John Ruskin, and others. Both *The Works of Sir Joseph Paxton* and Chadwick's more comprehensive study, *The Park and the Town* (1966), are organized around projects and project types rather than personalities. Chadwick supplies biographical information from time to time, but his main interests lie in questions of lasting cultural contributions, aesthetic qual-

ity, intellectual content, and the significance of the final product.

In contrast, Markham (whose biography I have not read) and Colquhoun paid more attention to the personal relationships in Paxton's life as revealed in unpublished correspondence. Evidently, Colquhoun consulted archives on both sides of the Atlantic. She gleaned information from Paxton's public statements – those found in his own gardening and horticultural periodicals, in county records offices, in the House of Commons reports, in the Records Office of the House of Lords, and elsewhere – but for quotations in this biography, she selected much more from Paxton's *private* communications. Her view of Paxton, then, is more personal than Chadwick's, which is fine; we can learn a great deal from either view. Interestingly, Colquhoun may have shed more light on “the spirit of the age” than Chadwick did. The biographer must, after all, tell a story, and even the metaphors Colquhoun uses to keep the narrative moving, month by month, year by year, are revelations of the age in which Paxton flourished.

“The Duke would always win the war for Paxton's attention,” writes Colquhoun of Cavendish, the sixth duke

of Devonshire, whose main competitor for Paxton's time and energy was Paxton's wife, Sarah – or, rather, Sarah and their children. As a young head gardener striving to make everything on the grounds of Chatsworth the finest of its kind, Paxton was committed to one place, where his growing family was based. Yet as he took on more responsibilities over the years, he was repeatedly drawn away from his wife and family for long periods of time by some project or whim of the duke. He shared with the duke a growing passion for individual plants rare or recently introduced into Britain. He also became fascinated by vast building projects and garden features, measurable in linear feet or in acres, in cost of materials, or in expenditures of man-hours. As the story of Paxton's life unfolds, there is some mention of the immeasurable: beauty, tenderness, a sense of wonder. Increasingly, however, great volume, height, breadth, rarity, or being the first or being the best took precedence. Apparently, these were attributes that deeply impressed Paxton, his colleagues, and the public at large.

In 1840, Paxton's curvilinear glasshouse was “by all accounts, the greatest glass structure in the world,” Colquhoun writes. Its height and span were superior to those of some outstanding railway stations in England.

A few years later, when Queen Victoria and Prince Albert arrived at Chatsworth on short notice, Paxton's ability to organize an extravaganza in the gardens, complete with bursts of cannons and fireworks, drew high praise from Arthur Wellesley, the duke of Wellington, who asserted that he had never witnessed such grandeur anywhere in Europe. In 1844, when it appeared that Czar Nicholas I of Russia might visit Chatsworth, Paxton had men working day and night to achieve a stunning feat – the highest gravity-fed fountain in the world. Although the czar never arrived, Paxton's Emperor Fountain, which soared to more than twice the height of the fountain at Peterhof in Russia, was “a glorious success” in the duke's opinion. That success set a pattern, traceable throughout Colquhoun's fine biography: Paxton would continually strive to design and build structures and garden features that might outdo some celebrated object or place. The Crystal Palace, erected within a few months in London's Hyde Park in 1851, was “six times the size of St. Paul's Cathedral,” a thirty-five-year undertaking. When the Crystal Palace was later dismantled and moved to its permanent home on a hilltop in Sydenham in Kent,

Paxton laid out the grounds in terraces with pools and jets of water to achieve an “English Versailles.” (Chadwick notes that Paxton fully intended to “outrival Versailles.”)

There was, of course, a price to be paid for all these triumphs. Colquhoun quotes letters to Paxton from his wife, Sarah, who longed for his return and regretted that seasons of loveliness in the gardens of Chatsworth had come and gone in his absence. There are letters to Sarah from Paxton telling of the duke's kindness and their encounters with some wonders of the world on the Grand Tour while he also longed to see Sarah and the children. One son, a child of five, suffered from a terminal illness during the time Paxton was away. Another son became increasingly unruly, and a daughter died while away at a boarding school in Switzerland. As years passed, the letters dwelt increasingly on fame, money, speculative investments, illnesses, death. Paxton and his wife grew apart, spending more and more time in separate households, becoming overworked and harried. After long periods of illness with Paxton often by his side, the elderly duke passed away. Paxton himself died at the age of sixty-one. Other men, nameless, had died in a tragic accident during the

rebuilding of the Crystal Palace at Sydenham. Historians have alluded to some of these human costs, but in Colquhoun's biography we notice the costs accumulating bit by bit, in chronological order, often without the author's comment. It is up to the reader to weigh them in the balance along with what Paxton achieved.

The reader also is left to piece together what, exactly, constituted Paxton's visionary life. Surely, it had to do with universal well-being. Consider the hopes for international peace and prosperity shared by all those who planned the Great Exhibition; Paxton's public outcry for free admittance to the exhibition (a suggestion not heeded); his efforts working with others on Parliamentary committees to secure better sanitation and means of communication in the London metropolis; and even his designs for small parks in or near a few industrial cities. But that visionary life also was focused on greatness: creating some comprehensive collection of plants from around the world or some all-encompassing glass shell over acres of ground, mature trees, material goods, and technological wonders where crowds could gather, moving

freely, unharmed by the natural elements of wind, rain, hail, sleet, excessive heat and cold, untroubled by the particles of soot that mingled with fog and penetrated the atmosphere of England's greatest cities. Was Paxton's vision really focused on perfecting human defenses against natural forces? Again, Darwin's praise, "art beats nature," comes to mind, and the words are haunting.

In her prologue, Colquhoun tells the harrowing story of the fire that consumed Paxton's Crystal Palace at Sydenham in 1936. The palace was never rebuilt. As she explains, the site has not yet been redeveloped, and a bust of Sir Joseph Paxton, erected there after his death, now turns its back on the "forlorn" hill. She provides no images of the abandoned site, but some, including one of the bust of Paxton, appear in Chadwick's *The Works of Sir Joseph Paxton*. In the damaged statues and the staircases slipping into ruin we see signs of erosion and weathering, decay and dark shadows but also of new life and exuberant growth in the long grasses, shrubs, and trees. Eugène Atget could reveal the beauty and mystery of such a place in a photograph. Ecologists could explain the processes of weathering and healing, both above and below ground. That, too, would be visionary. – Melanie Simo

## Calendar

### **The American Landscape: Ideals, Influences, Innovations**

A lecture series cosponsored by the New York Botanical Garden, the New-York Historical Society, and the Foundation for Landscape Studies

**To register:** Call the Continuing Education department at the New York Botanical Garden: 718-817-8747

**Location:** New-York Historical Society, Central Park West at 77th Street

**General admission:** Individual programs, \$25 (members, students, educators, seniors \$23) Complete series, \$90 (members, students, educators, seniors \$81)

This series examines ways in which nineteenth-century parks, gardens, and paintings reflect the aesthetic values and practical technologies of the period. Four noted landscape historians will show how Romantic ideals, European influences, and technological innovations shaped and portrayed the American scene in the nineteenth century.

**Monday**  
**January 23, 2006**  
**6:30 p.m.**

### **Jay Cantor** **Rural Images of America: Myth and Realities**

The overarching image of the American rural landscape in the nineteenth century is largely the result of Romantic painters loosely associated under the term Hudson River School. It is, however, increasingly clear that the view these artists provided was highly selective and, to a degree, politically motivated. This talk by Jay Cantor will provide a perspective on the artistic myth of the American landscape and the mundane realities of the land itself as it was recast under the economic realities of the American nation-making agenda.

Jay Cantor is an art historian who has been published widely on painting, architecture, and the decorative arts, including Winterthur, an extensive history of museum and landscape gardens and the growth of American collecting in the decorative arts. He is a trustee of the Foundation for Landscape Studies.

**Monday**  
**February 13, 2006**  
**6:30 p.m.**

### **Therese O'Malley** **Gardens under Glass, a Natural History of Greenhouses**

The collection of exotic plants from warm climates necessitated their protection and display in greenhouses. Concentrating on the transatlantic exchange of plants, ideas, and people, Therese O'Malley, guest curator for the New York Botanical Garden's exhibition *Glasshouses: The Architecture of Light and Air* (see review, page 13), will show how their evolution was, and continues to be, vital to botany, horticulture, and landscape design.

Therese O'Malley is the associate dean at the Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. She is currently the president of the Society of Architectural Historians and lectures and publishes on the history of landscape and garden design primarily in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

**Monday**  
**March 13, 2006**  
**6:30 p.m.**

### **David Schuyler** **The Sanctified Landscape: Art, Literature, and the Emergence of a Preservationist Ethos in the Hudson Valley, 1820-1850**

Thanks to the writings of Andrew Jackson Downing and through the influence of wealthy individuals who built houses and ornamental gardens, the Hudson Valley became the paradigmatic American landscape. The broader scenic context portrayed by painters, poets, and writers reinforced American taste in domestic design. David Schuyler will show how this new nineteenth-century American stylistic idiom, combined with the beginnings of an indigenous historic preservation movement, fostered our self-awareness as a new nation.

David Schuyler is the Arthur and Katherine Shadek Professor of the Humanities and Professor of American Studies at Franklin and Marshall College. He is the author of several books, including *Apostle of Taste: Andrew Jackson Downing 1815-1852*, and is the coeditor of three volumes of *The Frederick Law Olmsted Papers*.

**Monday  
April 3, 2006  
6:30 p.m.**

**Elizabeth Barlow Rogers  
International Romanticism  
and the American Landscape**

Andrew Jackson Downing, Frederick Law Olmsted, Calvert Vaux, and other contemporary landscape designers and their successors looked to England and also to Germany for inspiration and practical know-how. The eighteenth- and nineteenth-century gardens and parks of England inspired and influenced these Americans while also affecting the work of such Continental designers as the Marquis de Girardin at Ermenonville, Prince Franz of Anhalt-Dessau at Wörlitz, and Prince Pückler at Muskau. Elizabeth Barlow Rogers will show how American landscape architecture, far from being simply indigenous, was part of an important international trendsetting shift in garden and park design.

Elizabeth Barlow Rogers is the president of the Foundation for Landscape Studies and is the former administrator of Central Park, the first president of the Central Park Conservancy, and the founding director of Garden History and Landscape Studies at the Bard Graduate Center.

## Field Notes

**New Landscape History  
Chapter of the SAH**

The Landscape History Chapter of the Society of Architectural Historians, which was initiated at the 2004 annual meeting by landscape historian Marc Treib under the leadership of current SAH President, Therese O'Malley, is now one year old. Its mission is to increase the breadth and depth of work in the field of landscape history as well as to help overcome the disciplinary and geographic isolation of scholars and practitioners by providing an informal structure for the exchange of ideas, sources, and research concerned with the design and reading of the landscape.

At the 2005 annual meeting, which was held in Vancouver this past April, members further defined the chapter's purposes and considered activities for the coming year. The decision was made to insure that there will be at least one session on landscape history at every SAH annual meeting, with one of the tours of the host city devoted to a landscape itinerary. At other times of the year, chapter members may elect to sponsor tours in other places of particular landscape interest.

At future annual meetings, there will be book displays of landscape-related titles of interest to both the general membership and to the specialist. A website, accessible to chapter members, will be online soon. It will post research inquiries, shared findings, listings of recent publications, and a general newsletter of forthcoming events.

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Membership in the Society of Architectural Historians, a requirement for Landscape History Chapter membership, may be secured through [www.sah.org](http://www.sah.org).

**CHAMP: A new center for  
landscape heritage studies  
at the University of Illinois,  
Urbana-Champaign**

Cultural heritage, both in the sense of interpretation and preservation, has become an increasingly important issue under the current conditions of world globalization. To engage some of the problems that this trend implies, a new center at the University of Illinois recently has been established for the study of landscape heritage and the representation of culture, society, and the built environment.

The Collaborative for Cultural Heritage and Museum Practices (CHAMP) has two missions. One is the development of a Museum Studies Program that defines the museum in the broadest sense as any site for formal display and representation of the material world, including traditional art and natural history museum exhibitions, monuments, historic cities, landscapes, and archaeological sites. The second mission is the study of the practice and theoretical basis of conservation, preservation, and historic transformation in living landscapes.

Rather than the individual – and isolated – building or monument, the CHAMP maintains that landscape is the appropriate scale and necessary focus of heritage inquiry because it is on the landscape where many of the most important articulations of identity, ownership, and ideology are inscribed. Landscape encompasses the full physical, social, political, economic, ideological, and ecological context of the built environment and is deeply tied to issues of social justice and human rights.

Masters and doctoral students may pursue certificates in either the Museum Practices or the Cultural Heritage track, each of which is designed to respond to the requirements of its home departments. Participating departments include land-

scape architecture, anthropology, art history, urban and regional planning, and architecture as well as the Graduate School of Library and Information Sciences.

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**Landscape Studies  
at Smith College**

Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts, has established a tenure-track position in Landscape Studies, which is believed to be the first such faculty appointment in an undergraduate institution in the United States. A national search is taking place this fall. The job description currently is posted on Smith's Landscape Studies website as well as in professional publications.

The largest women's college in the United States, Smith, which boasts a campus laid out by Frederick

Law Olmsted as a botanic garden and a range of greenhouses designed by Lord & Burnham, has been committed to the study of landscape from its inception. In 1914, it introduced a course in landscape architecture, one of the first such courses for women in the United States.

Landscape Studies at Smith is a multidisciplinary program that joins the arts and literary studies with the social sciences, biological and environmental sciences, and engineering in the study of the built environment. The program draws on the strengths of Smith faculty in several departments by offering courses in architecture, landscape architecture, landscape studies, biological science, environmental planning, art history, public policy, literature, and engineering. An introductory survey course, LSS100: *Issues in Landscape Studies*, taught by Smith faculty and guest lecturers from across North America, will be offered in the spring semester. Since 2001, more than five hundred students have enrolled in this course and in other introductory and advanced landscape studies and landscape studio courses. For more information about the program and about the new faculty position, please consult: [www.smith.edu/landscapestudies](http://www.smith.edu/landscapestudies).

[site LINES]

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