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Letter from the Editor

This issue of *Site/Lines* focuses on the aesthetics of the Japanese garden and its influence in the West. Its origins lie in the Chinese garden, which was imported into the country in conjunction with Buddhism in 552. It is not surprising, however, that an indigenous garden tradition quite different from that of China evolved on this small, well-watered island, a country whose size, climate, and topography differ so greatly from those of its mainland neighbor.

Besides its debt to Buddhist philosophy, the Japanese garden owes something to its ancient roots in the native, nature-oriented religion of Shintoism, which ascribes sanctity to certain objects such as boulders, often framed by a *torii*, or gate, to mark them as a destination for pilgrims. The influence of this indigenous spiritual tradition, combined with the tenets of Buddhism and a deep appreciation of the country's scenic beauty, accounts for the use of natural objects as primary materials in the construction of Japanese gardens.

During the Heian period (794–1185), still inspired by Chinese models, gardens were larger than they would later become. They contained lakes with islands consisting of arrangements of rocks, some intended to suggest the form of a symbolically meaningful tortoise or crane. Pavilions in the style known as *shinden-zukuri* stood at the edge of the water and served as viewing platforms. In the eleventh century, the principles of Japanese garden design became codified in an important manual of garden rules known as the *Sakuteiki*. In an essay here on this important treatise, Natsumi Nonaka, an architectural historian specializing in landscape subjects, explains that the art of setting stones is the primary step in making a Japanese garden, as they are the basic architectural elements in creating its ponds, islands, and waterfalls.

Although its structure is derived principally from the composition of rocks and the setting of stones, the Japanese garden is not without flowers. Azaleas, beautifully clipped to form flowing mounds, are admired by visitors today, and the symbolical presence in gardens of “the three friends of winter” – pine, bamboo, and plum – dates from Heian

times. Still observed is a deep-seated cultural tradition of plum-blossom viewing, which takes place at winter's end. Paula Deitz writes about this third friend of winter in her narrative of a recent trip to Japan, taken for the sole purpose of participating in this annual ritual.

By the Muromachi period (1333–1573), with the rise of the Zen sect of Buddhism, gardens became austere but compelling compositions within small enclosed spaces whose visual sphere was sometimes enlarged with outside vistas of “borrowed scenery” (*shakkei*). The main function of Zen monastic gardens was to foster meditation, and the art of setting of stones was a primary design consideration. The choice and placement of stones were also important in the creation of the “dewy path” (*roji*) in the tea garden where the ritualized tea ceremony (*cha no yu*) formulated by Sen no Rikyu (1521–1591) was conducted in a small structure of elegantly rustic simplicity. The tea ceremony, which is carried over to the present day, is meant to induce a mood of *wabi*: appreciation of the beauty inherent in the craftsmanship of humble spaces and articles of everyday use.

In another essay, the landscape architect and writer

Marc Peter Keane explains how the *Sakuteiki's* prescriptions regarding the setting of stones, together with the Zen approach to garden design absorbed during his long residency in Japan, have influenced his own work. Keane's essay is complemented by a profile of Stephen Morrell, also a garden designer and Zen practitioner, who is the director of the John P. Humes Japanese Stroll Garden on the north shore of Long Island and the guiding spirit behind its ongoing creation and maintenance.

The Japanese garden continued to flourish during the Edo period (1603–1868) as a deeply traditional yet continually innovative art form. But the impetus for change from within diminished after the appearance of American naval commander Commodore Perry in Tokyo Bay in 1853. Understandably, as Japan opened its borders to the outside world, it felt with increasing intensity the influence of Western culture. As a corollary, the West appreciated what it perceived as Oriental exoticism, and the replication of Japanese-garden style became a widespread vogue that continues to the present. “Style” is the appropriate word inasmuch as the landscape idiom that was being purveyed by the Japanese was now a national cultural product. As Kendall Brown points out, the

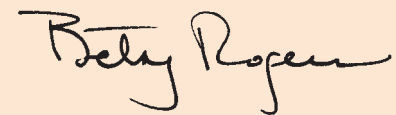
Japanese garden also became an instrument of propaganda in the hands of the country's imperial rulers at a succession of nineteenth- and twentieth-century world's fairs. And despite the West's opposition to a militant Japan during the first half of the twentieth century, the popularity of the Japanese garden abroad did not wane. Today there are an estimated 250 public Japanese gardens in at least 53 countries.

The Japanese garden did not merely spawn replications of its basic vocabulary of forms; it inspired modern architects in ways that reinforced their radical break from Beaux-Arts neoclassicism, use of ornament, and dependence on an eclectic mélange of various European styles. While European modernists for the most part sought new forms of expression through machine technology, they were nevertheless influenced to a degree by the minimalist elegance of Japanese architecture. In the United States, Frank Lloyd Wright forged a distinctly American form of modernism influenced by Japanese craft traditions. His vision incorporated respect for materials, underlying restraint, asymmetrical composition, consideration of spatial flow, and integration

of interior and exterior. The preeminent Wright scholar Anthony Alofsin maintains in his essay that Wright was inspired as much by gardens as by architecture during his 1905 trip to Japan. The photographs that Wright took on that trip, which Alofsin earlier published as a book (*Frank Lloyd Wright's Fifty Views of Japan: The 1905 Photo Album*), demonstrate that Wright did not focus on the temple structures in the famous monastery gardens of Kyoto independently of their relationship to the designed landscapes around them.

To broaden our understanding of the importance of the Japanese garden as a cultural expression in its own right and also as an influence on designers in the West, the Foundation for Landscape Studies is offering a study tour entitled “In the Footsteps of Frank Lloyd Wright: The Gardens of Japan” in spring 2009. Prior to that, the California State University, Long Beach, is hosting an international conference on Japanese gardens outside Japan from March 26 to 29, 2009. Our readers will find more information on these events in this issue.

Good green wishes,



Elizabeth Barlow Rogers
Editor

The Long Life of the Japanese Garden

Plum Blossoms: The Third Friend of Winter

As one who marks the seasons with rituals of her own, I have long been drawn to Japan, where the entire culture is attentive to nature and its cyclical adornments. With the same pleasure and regret for the ephemerality of cherry blossoms and the scarlet hues of autumnal maples, I have cherished the experience of walking the paths of temple and shrine gardens with hundreds of others, making a pilgrimage through time. In 1999, while visiting Kamakura in May, the season of clipped azaleas, I first discovered the temple Hokai-ji and its spectacular allée of glossy green trees. When I learned they were plum trees, I made a mental note to return someday to see them in bloom.

In Japan, the plum tree flowers just as winter tantalizingly heralds spring. More than 350 varieties of flowering plum (*Prunus mume*) with white, red, or pink blossoms bloom from late January through March, making it difficult to pinpoint an optimum moment for viewing. As the years passed, I instead encountered plum trees mostly through art – primarily on the four sliding door panels or *fusuma* installed in the *shoin* or Japanese reception room at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The panels are collectively titled *The Old Plum* and attributed to Kano Sansetsu, c. 1545; I began visiting them regularly to marvel at the tree's thickly gnarled trunk, crooked branches, and wispy white blossoms set against gold leaf. And in my catalogue of Rimpa art from the Idemitsu Collection in Tokyo, I frequently study the famous pair of six-fold screens of blossoming red and white plum trees, attributed to Ogata Korin and painted around 1712. In quintessential Japanese style, the branches of the red plum twist and turn, contrasting with the linear branch of white. Both are starkly etched into a gold background above a stylized river in black.

In January this year, a winter exhibition at the Kaikodo gallery in New York entitled “Let It Snow” featured a nineteenth-century hanging scroll by Okada Tamechika, *Fujiwara Kinto with Blossoming Plum*. Under the snow-laden branches of a red plum, a portly imperial official in black robe and head-dress holds a sprig of plum blossoms and a fan. He is compos-

ing a poem for the emperor as he shuffles back to court through drifts of snow. An irresistible image: plum blossoms in snow. I flew to Japan on February 10 and found a country celebrating plum blossoms in every aspect of daily life.

I began my pilgrimage at the Hatakeyama Memorial Museum of Fine Art in Tokyo, founded in 1964 by Issey Hatakeyama, who collected unusual tea ceremony utensils and related art objects with seasonal themes that are displayed at appropriate times. In the winter exhibition, featuring plum blossoms and camellias, the vigor and beauty of the three friends of winter traditionally depicted together – pine, bamboo, and plum – were captured in underglaze blue on a seventeenth-century bowl and lid from the Ming Dynasty in China. This delicate bowl was a reminder that the plum tree was a native of China before it arrived in Japan in the seventh century.

In one of the twelve paintings of birds and flowers by Sakai Hoitsu from the Edo period, a bright pink camellia is entwined in a white plum with a Japanese nightingale poised on its bough. Unlike cherry blossoms, which burst into flower simultaneously, the plum blooms gradually along a branch and is por-

trayed in art with both full five-petaled blossoms and tight buds at the end of each twig. This iconography establishes an air of expectation, of future potential – the same sensation I felt later standing in groves of plums. Even on a small ceramic incense burner on view by Ogata Kenzan (Ogata Korin's brother), the decoration of a heavy twisted branch combines full white blossoms with buds. As is customary, the visit to the museum concluded with bowls of green tea whipped to a froth and sweets in the shape of plum blossoms. Each guest held a different bowl with individual characteristics worth studying.

Little preparation for this voyage was required. My friends in Japan embraced my quest, taking me to view plum blossoms in several regions and milieu. Amy Katoh, whose books and Tokyo store, Blue & White, seek to preserve traditional rural crafts and the indigenous indigo culture, had prepared for us, in her inimitable style, a bright pink-and-white booklet entitled *Pickled Plums & Friends*. Among stenciled designs of plum blossoms for *yukata* (a Japanese hand towel cum sweat band) and evocative haiku is a mélange of history, customs, and recipes, especially for the tasty pickled plums called *umeboshi*. (A popular Japanese proverb – “Pickled ume and friends, the older, the better” – gave Amy the title.) Here one learns that in the relatively peaceful Edo period, the crossing of natural varieties yielded a wide variety of plums with fruits that are smaller and more tart than their European or American counterparts. Some large orchards, planted for the fruit alone, are dazzling when in bloom.

Armed with historical and horticultural information, I set out with Amy for the Shimane Prefecture, on the Sea of Japan, and the town of Omori, with its narrow streets of restored wooden houses, shops, and shrines along a river valley north of the famous Iwami Ginzan silver mine. Last year the entire region, which dates to the sixteenth century, was designated a UNESCO



Fujiwara Kinto with Blossoming Pine by Okada Tamechika (1823–1864), ink and color on silk, 38 1/2 x 13 in. Courtesy of Kaikodo.

World Heritage Site. We stayed with her friends the Matsubes in their home, Abe Ke, a rambling Japanese courtyard house, one of the largest in town. Its succession of rooms separated by shoji screens and fusuma surrounds interior courtyard gardens with verandas. Shoes were removed and placed on the packed dirt floor of the entrance hall.

During the first night, I left the warmth of my futon bed and slid open the inner screen and an outer glass one to watch a heavy snowfall on the courtyard garden with its stone snow lantern. The next morning, I walked into the front garden and there, gnarled and stunted with age, was a white plum tree in blossom with glistening snow piled high on its branches and in its crevices. This was the reason I had come to Japan. Later I would see many others, planted along the river that meandered through the town under high arched bridges. Camellia hedges with red blossoms were equally encrusted with snow.

Indoors, outdoors, in nature and in art, the plum seemed ubiquitous. During the day, we visited the Matsubes' store, Gungendo, managed by their daughter, Yukiko. Installed in the entrance was a seasonal display of blue and white ribbon streamers with stylized paper plum blossoms. Immediately inside there was a pink obi with a plum blossom design. At the house itself, where Tomi Matsube oversees a Life Style Study Center, ceramic jars with a few sprigs of plum blossoms were placed strategically for the best aesthetic effect. And along the wintry town streets, cut-off bamboo stalks tied to the exterior latticework of houses were filled with plum blossoms.

One afternoon, we made an excursion to view a nearby dry garden with exquisitely pruned trees and clipped shrubs along a river of stones. We also visited the Izumo Taisha Shrine, the oldest Shinto shrine in Japan, with its signature crossed bargeboards at the peak of the gabled roof. On the way back, by chance, in an enclave of old houses with tiled roofs, we passed by a classic vignette of the season: a massive plum tree with dark pink blossoms at the edge of a rice field covered in snow. And the snow continued to fall.

Dinner at a long table in the commodious kitchen of Abe house was a communal, neighborly affair. For the occasion, bottles of plum wine were opened and shared with guests. On wooden shelves in an immense storeroom behind the kitchen stood large jars of umeboshi from the crop of the previous

summer. Visitors to the Study Center are encouraged to borrow an in-house digital camera to record images of the town as a visual essay of their own impressions. One of the guests from Osaka, Aki Izuhara, showed me the sequence of photographs she had made in the fresh snow, including one of the gnarled plum tree. Since I choose to describe images only in notes, she generously offered me a disk of her photographs as a souvenir.

We then left these wintry scenes behind, continuing on to Kagoshima, on Japan's southernmost island of Kyushu. There we visited Kobo Shobu, a residential craft center where Down syndrome and autistic adults create traditional and original Japanese crafts. The change in temperature was striking. The drive into the city was lined with what we dubbed "corduroy" tea fields after the distinctive green rows of tea plants. The plum trees in this warmer clime were in full bloom; our host, Kobo Shobu's director, was particularly proud of the white plum that loomed over his garden. We saw the tree at twilight, which gave it an eerie glow.

The next day we traveled to a mountainside on the coast overlooking a large expanse of bay. We looked out toward Japan's dramatic volcano, Sakurajima: deep green slopes on a peninsula, with wisps of steam rising from the crater. In a sweeping garden on our side, plum trees with pale pink blossoms were interspersed among palm trees in the foreground, a subtropical view.

Back in Tokyo, my plum blossom walks became more serious under the guidance of the writer Sumiko Enbutsu, author most recently of *A Flower Lover's Guide to Tokyo: 40 Walks for All Seasons*. In it, she tells the story of the ninth-century Kyoto scholar-statesman Sugawara Michizane, much favored at court for his command of Chinese classics and poetry in this early period of Japanese literature. Falsely charged by rivals, he was exiled to Kyushu in despair, leaving his beloved pink plum tree with this farewell poem: "When the east wind blows, / emit thy perfume, plum-blossom; / Because thy master is away, / forget not the spring."

His death soon thereafter was followed by a stream of natural disasters bringing about his swift posthumous restitution and deification as Tenjin, a "god of heaven." Shrines dedicated to him and planted with plum trees are found all over Japan. As the first blooming of plums coincides with the dates of university entrance exams in January, aspirants who seek support from this scholarly god hang thousands of wooden plaques at the shrines, inscribed with wishes for success. Examination results are announced around the period of full bloom.

On a Saturday morning, Sumiko gathered a few friends to join the throngs visiting plum gardens at Zen temples in the eastern section of Kamakura. (A former capital of Japan [1185–1333], today Kamakura is a residential quarter on Sagami Bay, southwest of Tokyo.) While the rest of the city was out doing the weekly shopping, a steady stream of visitors wound through the neighborhoods that separate the temples. Private gardens yielded plum blossoms in all hues – some weeping to the ground – plus red camellias and pine trees pruned into exotic forms. Sometimes the path followed the banks of the Namerigawa River.

For anyone who treasures Saiho-ji, the moss garden in Kyoto, the visit to Zuisen-ji in Kamakura is revealing. Muso Soseki, who designed Saiho-ji's lush landscape as the temple's first abbot in 1339, began designing in Kamakura, twelve years earlier, as the first priest at Zuisen-ji. Beyond the temple and its plum trees, Muso carved out caverns at the base of a steep cliff above a pond. In his time, a dramatic waterfall cascaded over the cliff and into the pond below, completing the composition, but even today the dark caverns in the rock – with water below and sky above – are an arresting sight.

Though the grounds of the temples we visited were not extensive, each was distinctive in the color and arrangement of its plum trees and the preservation of its landscaped features. At the entrance to Sugimoto-dera, the oldest temple in Kamakura, an ancient white plum was supported by stakes in the manner the Japanese do so artfully. A pink plum in the same grouping was set off by a yellow witch hazel that bloomed simultaneously. Well-placed stepping stones surrounded the thatched-roofed temple, and to the side stood a small pavilion with effigies of Buddha wearing ritualistic bibs made of colorfully designed textiles. Of Hokoku-ji, one remembers the woven bamboo fence, the dark pink plum near the entrance, the raked gravel and camellia trees leading to a dark and mysterious bamboo grove, like a forest of organ pipes, and caves again in an overhanging cliff. And of Jomyo-ji, the rounded forms of tea hedges surrounding the gardens and the combination of white, pink, and red plums gradually coming into bloom.

We climbed the Genjiyama Hill overlooking Sagami Bay for lunch in an old farmhouse in the sturdy architectural style developed for northern regions. The farmhouse had been relo-

cated here and restored, its massive beams and loft-like upper rooms creating a sense of amplitude and purpose.

Rested, we moved on to Hokai-ji, and there I finally achieved the fulfillment of the wish I'd first had on that May visit, years earlier: the overarching entrance allée of plum trees bore myriad buds and fragrant pink blossoms. Further along stood a majestic weeping plum with wooden supports that appeared integral to its natural form. Other images I still recall: the straw hats of the gardeners, and a large ceramic bell. We ended at the great Shinto shrine of Tsurugaoko Hachiman with the double lotus ponds that were in flower on my earlier visit. The shrine is grander and more ornate than the temples, and the plum blossoms on either side of the steep stairway leading up to it were equally impressive.

Sumiko and Amy teamed up to plan my last day, in Hino City, on the western outskirts of Tokyo. The highlight would be a visit to Keio Mogusa-en Garden (No. 37 in Sumiko's book). Afterwards we would attend the fire ritual at Takahata Fudo, a nearby temple of esoteric Buddhism, and visit the antiques fair on the temple grounds (a natural coupling in Japan). As we approached the garden, graphics of plum blossoms on pink-and-white banners attached to streetlight poles announced its nearby presence. But nothing prepared me for what I saw as I ascended the stone steps and emerged from a wooded hillside: eight hundred plum trees of every pastel hue and at various stages of bloom. In the middle of the garden, by a thatched-roofed farmhouse, stood an old white plum that had been planted there by a nun three hundred years ago. Because plum trees are pruned and hacked back to create fuller blooms, the branches develop in contorted directions like the tree in the Met fusuma or the one in the Korin screen. Over the course of time – they can live for centuries – they develop their picturesque gnarled trunks.

Originally the site of a temple called Shoren-an, the landscaping here is enhanced by ponds that reflect the trees, and bridges guide visitors along a circuitous route over the water for a full experience of the garden. Interspersed pines, elegantly pruned into cloud formations, are decoratively protected by taut ropes – like the ribs of bamboo umbrellas, Sumiko says, but with the practical purpose of preventing accumulated snowfall. This garden was the pinnacle of plums.

When we arrived later for the fire ceremony in the fourteenth-century, smoke-blackened Fudo Hall, just a few places were left inside, and we squeezed in before the incantations began. A central fire had been lit for the burning of stacks of

prayer sticks, seeds and beans, and other plants. Carefully tended by the priest, the fire conveyed a sense of purification. After the congregants rose to circle between the fire and the central altar to leave monetary donations, they settled back on the floor, and the priest began to speak. Even though I do not know Japanese, his tone expressed an openness to the communal aspects of the ceremony, and he had special words for a mother holding an infant, beautifully dressed as if for a baptism of sorts.

Once outside, we mingled among the flea market merchants and their assortment of antiques laid out on the ground or on low shelves. Amy, as usual, sought out blue and white ceramics and textiles. I wandered over to a rack of old kimonos, always in ample supply since clothes are discarded at death in Japan. Rummaging through, I was intrigued by one the merchant said was from the 1950s. Against a solid ground the color of rosé, a design in white combined sprigs of plum blossom – both flowers and buds – with bouquets of autumnal chrysanthemums. It is unusual in Japan to mix seasons in a design, since women wear only what is appropriate to the season. Yet there was its message: the first and last flowers to bloom in the year. I purchased it for five dollars.

We moved on to the rustic Sanko-in convent for a vegetarian lunch in the Take-no-Gosho style of Kyoto. We were served exquisitely presented steamed turnips, potatoes, and seaweed, reconstituted tofu and other delicacies; the carrots were shaped into five-petaled plum blossoms. And for our final stop, we passed by the Jindai-ji temple for a charming view of its thatched front gate flanked by pink and white plum trees. That evening, at dinner with Amy at Shabusen in the Ginza, the dessert, *yoshino-koubai*, was the real thing: a Japanese plum, slow-cooked in honey and served in a glass of clear jelly.

Over the long season of the plum's flowering, as winter releases its hold on the land, these rituals surrounding its blossoms are performed countrywide, an integral part of Japan's cultural identity. I will continue to share in them by wearing the jacket I had made from my plum-blossom kimono – a kimono another woman wore long ago, to celebrate the coming of spring and its sustained pleasures of "one early, one later." – Paula Deitz

The Japanese Garden: The Art of Setting Stones

The earliest known Japanese treatise on garden making is generally attributed to Tachibana no Toshitsuna (1028–94). The author was a nobleman, the son of an imperial regent, and he intended his treatise for the aristocracy, who were the main clients in the Heian period (794–1185). Without illustrations and originally untitled, the treatise was the product of a long oral tradition that had been passed down through generations of gardeners. The oldest surviving version of the text, in the form of manuscript scrolls, dates from the Kamakura period (1185–1336), when it was referred to as *Senzai-hisho* (*The Secret Text of Gardens*). In the Edo period (1603–1868), the treatise acquired the title *Sakuteiki* (*The Book of Gardening*).

The treatise opens with the topical heading *Ishi wo taten koto* (The art of setting stones). *Ishi* is the Japanese word for stone, and the expression *ishi wo taten koto* not only refers to how stones should be placed in relation to one another in a garden, but also to the act of making the garden itself. Three basic principles for setting stones are postulated: follow the rules of nature; study the examples of past masters; and model designs after famous landscapes. A detailed explanation follows on how to construct ponds, islands, and waterfalls using stones.

The recurrent mention in the *Sakuteiki* of the importance of performing such tasks "according to the will or desire of stones" (*ishi no kowan ni shitagaite*) testifies that their treatment was both central and essential. As Josiah Conder observed perceptively in *Landscape Gardening in Japan* (1893), the importance attached to stones, rocks, and boulders is a striking characteristic of Japanese gardens. Nowhere in the Western world do we find gardens in which simple stones and rocks play so significant a role in the design and making of the garden.

The value they are accorded presumably derives from an older belief in sacred stones called *iwakura*, boulders used since ancient times as prayer sites and usually located in mountains. Each was seen as containing a god or as being a link to the world of the gods. The author of the *Sakuteiki* and his contemporaries would have perceived stones as having some kind of will or desire, if not a spirit or life of their own. Although this animism may no longer be widespread in our age, the use of stones as a central component in Japanese garden design has survived unchanged. With maximum exploitation of their natural texture, stones remain an aesthetic device highly expressive of a subtle yet powerful beauty.

Pond gardens

The pond garden is the oldest garden type found in Japanese landscape history. The garden of Daikaku-ji Temple (834) in west Kyoto is the oldest artificial garden in Japan, and its Osawa Pond is the most complete Heian garden lake to survive. This is a *chisen-shuyu*-style garden – a pond garden to be enjoyed from a boat. The site was originally a *rikyu* (literally, a “detached palace,” a secondary imperial palace apart from the official one), made up of a *Shinden*-style mansion and a garden with a large pond. *Shinden* was the preferred architectural style among the Heian aristocracy. Residences consisted of a main building facing south, several subsidiary buildings connected by covered corridors, and a garden with a pond and fishing pavilions. As boating accompanied by musical entertainments and moon-viewing were popular pastimes for Heian nobles, the Osawa Pond was placed southeast of the building complex so that the moon could be viewed rising over the water.

Osawa Pond was constructed by damming a natural stream to the northeast of the property, conforming to the theory proposed in the *Sakuteiki* that water should flow into a pond from the northeast and flow out from the southwest. (China’s lovely Lake Dongting Hu in Hunan province provided the model.) At the pond’s northern end are two small islands named Tenjinjima and Kiku-ga-shima. Between them several stone islets appear in a straight line, imitating junks anchored in a harbor. Along the stream to the north of the Pond is a stone arrangement referred to as “Nakoso waterfall,” named after the Nakoso checkpoint in northern Japan, which is a well-known topos in medieval Japanese poetry. Here rocks and stones form small-scale versions of famous natural landscapes from China or Japan in a technique called *shukkei* (miniature landscape).

The garden of Tenryu-ji (1339), which was built five hundred years later in the river resort of Arashiyama in west Kyoto, has a pond too small for boating; it is instead a *chisen-kaiyu*-style garden – a pond garden to be enjoyed by strolling. This garden contains the earliest example of *shakkei* (borrowed scenery), the technique of visually incorporating into a garden natural features lying beyond its boundaries. Originally the distant prospect of two hills, Kameyama and Arashiyama, was part of the garden landscape, although overgrown trees now obscure the view.

The Zen priest Muso Soseki (1275–1351) designed this garden on the site of a former *rikyu*. Emperor Godaigo (1288–1339),

who lived there as a child, successfully rebelled against the Kamakura shogunate to restore imperial power, but his reign was short-lived. His general Ashikaga Takauji betrayed and banished him, and established a new military shogunate in Kyoto. In 1339 Emperor Godaigo died in exile, and soon after Muso Soseki dreamed that the emperor, in the form of a golden dragon, rose out of the river in Arashiyama. Muso Soseki convinced Takauji to convert the Arashiyama detached palace into a temple to appease the spirit of the late emperor; the priest was then charged with the remodeling of the garden. Versed in Chinese art and culture, and inspired by the black ink paintings of the Song dynasty, Muso Soseki was one of the first to advocate the idea that gardens could be used as an aid to Zen meditation.

The pond at Tenryu-ji provided an ideal setting for stone arrangements featuring Chinese classical iconography. Designed to be viewed across the pond from the main building, beyond a bridge made of three slabs of stone, a large standing rock forms the base of a dry waterfall known as *Ryumon baku* (Dragon Gate waterfall). Above and slightly to the left of the base rock is a curved stone vaguely resembling a large fish. This stone is called the carp stone because it suggests a carp struggling against the current. It is associated with the old Chinese belief that a carp, after successfully ascending the Yellow River Gorge at Lung Men (Dragon Gate), will be transformed into a dragon. In China, “to pass the Dragon Gate” was a metaphor for passing the qualifying examinations for government service. In Japan, the carp attempting to climb the waterfall became a metaphor of Zen enlightenment through self-training and meditation.

Near the carp is an islet made of seven stones. This stone grouping alludes to the mythic mountain island in the East China Sea called Horai Island (named after the *yomogi* plant that flourishes in uninhabited places). Horai Island was the abode of the *sen-nin* or hermit of Chinese legend who leads a solitary life in the mountains, having achieved transcendental wisdom and immortality. This stone grouping became a favorite garden motif in Japan, frequently repeated in later gardens.

The garden at Tenryu-ji represents the transitional stage from Heian pond gardens. In addition to imitating natural landscapes, the stones’ arrangements were associated with moralistic meanings. No longer thought of as purely ornamental elements recreating beautiful scenery that gave pleasure to the senses, they carried spiritual connotations inviting the viewer to meditation. The spiritual symbolism of stones would be a central feature of dry landscape gardens in the centuries to come.

Karesansui (dry landscape) gardens

In the Muromachi era (1336–1573), a period dominated by military rule, priests and warriors preferred symbolic waterscapes. Influenced by Zen thinking and Chinese Song dynasty landscape paintings, the era’s gardens became increasingly abstract in design. In stark contrast to Western gardens, in which water and vegetation were indispensable components, these Japanese gardens could do without either. A garden without water is called a *karesansui*. Its main components are stone and moss, with gravel or sand used occasionally to fill in voids. The term “karesansui” was first used in the *Sakuteiki*, designating a dry landscape portion of a larger garden within which one could enter and move around. In the Muromachi era, however, it came to mean a stone garden that was a place for contemplation to be viewed exclusively from the interior of an adjoining building. Despite its paucity of materials and simplicity of design, the *karesansui* garden can evoke deep feelings and profound philosophical ideas.

Daisen-in, a subtemple in the large temple complex of Daitoku-ji (1315) in north Kyoto, features a typical *karesansui* garden dating from 1509. It was designed to be viewed from a *shoin*, a small room in a temple used as a study, featuring a *tokonoma* (alcove), *chigaidana* (staggered shelves), and *tsuke-shoin* (built-in desk). Later *shoins* were incorporated in residences of the ruling warrior class, and the term “*Shoin*-style” came to designate the architectural style of warrior mansions.

In the garden at Daisen-in is a pair of large rocks that stand upright, one slightly taller than the other; together, they represent a monumental waterfall. The ground is covered with white gravel raked in flowing patterns to represent a river and an ocean. The “water” precipitates down the cascade, forms a river that flows under bridges and around islands, and finally finds its way into the ocean. The itinerary of the water can be seen as an allegorical trajectory of human life. From waterfall to river, from river to sea, the watercourse widens as it moves

along its route, just as our perspective should broaden as we age. The water flowing under bridges and around several rocks may represent the surmounting of obstacles one encounters during the course of life. The sea suggests Mother Nature, the final destination of life's voyage.

The garden of Ryoan-ji (1619–80) in north Kyoto is the most famous karesansui garden in Japan. The site was a former aristocratic estate that was converted into a Zen temple in 1450. The dating of the stone garden is controversial, but the consensus is that it was originally created in the fifteenth century; its present form dates from the Edo period.

Enclosed on three sides by walls and on the fourth side by a wooden veranda from which visitors can contemplate the stone arrangements, the rectangular garden covered with white sand measures only 25 by 10 meters. Out of this sand rise fifteen stones arranged successively from the right in groups of three, two, three, two, and five. The sand is raked in a pattern of straight lines running almost the full length of the garden, except around the stones, where it is raked in concentric circles.

Unlike the powerful rocks that create a dynamic waterscape in the garden at Daisen-in, the stones at Ryoan-ji are not particularly distinctive in terms of shape, size, or color. Some barely rise above the ground. The emphasis is not on the individual stones but rather on their relative sizes and shapes, their combination in groups, and their spatial relationships to each other and the raked sand around them. Instead of



Stone garden at Ryoan-ji.

overtly referring to a particular scene in nature or the classical literary past, the stones remain vaguely and obliquely allusive. Proposed interpretations are as diverse as “a bird’s-eye view of a symbolic ocean dotted with islands,” or “a mother tiger and cubs crossing the sea.” The contemporary architect Arata Isozaki (1931–) remarked that the layout of the stones was in accordance with the golden ratio. But considering the fundamental Zen concepts of enlightenment through meditation and the experience of nothingness, the stones may symbolize nothing more than an invitation to contemplate the landscape and its possible meanings. Or they may be an ultimate expression of

Muromachi aesthetics of *yugen* (subtle profundity) and *yohaku no bi* (the beauty of empty space). In any case, the minimalist and monochromatic stone garden at Ryoan-ji features a pure form and a reductive aesthetic that would have significant repercussions in art and architecture. Isamu Noguchi referred to his sunken garden for the Chase Manhattan Bank Plaza in New York (1961–64) as “my Ryoan-ji.”

Roji (tea garden)

The Momoyama era (1573–1603) saw the development of two opposing trends in garden making: on the one hand, gardens featuring monumental stone arrangements displaying the lavish opulence of costly stones, exemplified by the garden at Daigo-Sampoh-in in southeast Kyoto (1589); on the other hand, the understated *roji* (literally “dewy path” but meaning “tea garden”) featuring a compressed rustic landscape with restrained use of stone ornaments. *Sado* (the tea ceremony), which established itself in Japan towards the end of the sixteenth century, gave birth to this latter type.

Tea drinking had its origins in China, but its transformation into a ritual embracing simplicity and restraint was a purely Japanese invention, and so, too, was the *roji*. Unlike the traditional gardens created to be enjoyed in their own right, the *roji* was a transitional space leading from the entry gate to the teahouse, often bordered by a simple fence of bamboo twigs and adorned with plants of restrained color. The teahouse was a modest grass-thatched hut with an interior space measuring only 4½ tatami mats (7.3 square meters). Spirituality was the key concept of the *roji*, one that Sen no Rikyu (1522–91), tea master of the Momoyama era, characterized as “the spiritual purity of the mind that has taken leave of all worldly toil and defilement.”

Simplicity pervades the design of the *roji*. Its characteristic feature lies in the stones combining both utilitarian and decorative functions: *tobi-ishi* (stepping stones), *tsukubai* (hand-washing basins), and *ishi-doro* (stone lanterns). *Tsukubai* (literally a place where one has to bend down) was the stone basin where visitors washed hands and purified themselves before entering the teahouse. *Ishi-doro* were placed along the *roji* to light the path for nocturnal tea ceremonies. They were soon adapted as ornaments in religious and secular gardens, and continue to adorn them to this day. The *tobi-ishi* were originally intended to protect the moss and to lead the visitor towards the teahouse, but they gradually gained an aesthetic characterized by the concepts of *wabi* (refined austerity) and *sabi* (similar in meaning to *wabi*; subdued taste).

The stones were selected for their shapes, colors, and surface textures. Uniformity or unity was not the issue; subtle diversities and irregularities among them added to the tasteful rusticity of the small garden space. In the *roji* of Fushin-an (1594) at the Omote Senke tea school in Kyoto, the *tobi-ishi* are set in moss in a deliberately oblique or winding course. At Koho-an garden (1621), designed by Kobori Enshu (1579–1647) in Daitoku-ji, Kyoto, the *tobi-ishi* are also set among gravel and moss in a slightly sinuous way. These stones are meant to manipulate the pace of the visitors, obliging them to slow down, look around, and see things that they would have passed by in everyday life. The *tobi-ishi* are thus intended to increase visitors’ consciousness of the quotidian and the ordinary and guide them toward a reevaluation of the importance of small daily activities. They have proved an enduring feature of Japanese gardens up to the present.

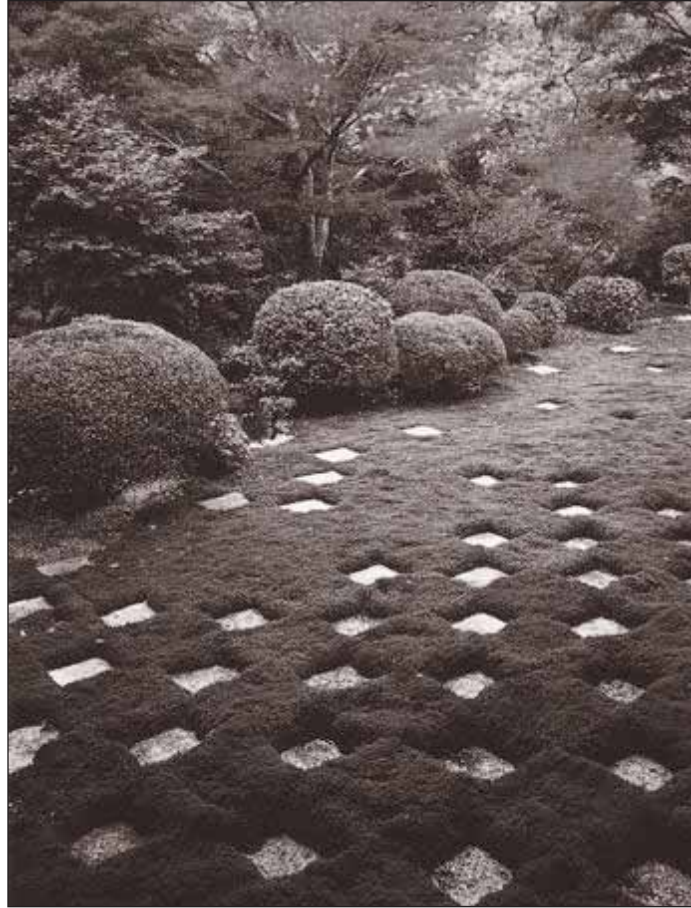
Stroll gardens

Katsura Rikyu (1620–45) is a sublime synthesis of the Japanese garden aesthetics hitherto described. This vast property (58,000 square meters) in southwest Kyoto was a former Heian Shinden-style mansion estate, remodeled in the early Edo period into a full-scale garden for strolling – a fourth garden type – and dotted with residential buildings and teahouses.

The residential buildings – the Old Shoin, the Middle Shoin, and the New Palace – are constructed in *Sukiya* (tea-house) style. Their rustic simplicity, devoid of ornamentation, was much admired by German architect Bruno Taut in *Houses and People of Japan* (1937). The three buildings are interconnected in a zigzag *gankou* (geese-in-flight) formation, engaging the stroller in a remarkable kinesthetic experience. The tea-houses are situated at scenic spots around the pond, linked by paths of stepping stones. A sequence of garden spaces unrolls in front of the visitor who follows the paths, creating unexpected surprises and offering a constantly changing view. As one zigzags toward the buildings or follows the intricate contours of the pond with its numerous peninsulas and bays, a series of vistas are alternately hidden and then revealed in a technique called *mie-gakure* (hide-and-reveal).

At Katsura, three kinds of tobi-ishi are used: *shin* (formal), *gyo* (semi-formal), and *so* (informal). The path leading to the front entrance of the Old Shoin is composed entirely of artificial stone slabs cut in geometrical shapes, *shin no tobi-ishi*. The path in front of the bench pavilion in the garden is a combination of artificially cut slabs and small natural stones, *gyo no tobi-ishi*. The path leading to the Shoi-ken teahouse is composed entirely of small natural stones called *so no tobi-ishi*. Thus the stepping stones themselves create a remarkably complex and beautiful effect. No other gardens display such a variety of pleasing ground patterns as those at Katsura. As Taut observed, the Japanese may indeed have a tendency, instead of looking upwards, to lower their gaze, as their sedentary pose on tatami has accustomed them to do so.

According to Taut, Katsura Rikyu is the highest achievement of Japanese aesthetic taste – a happy blend of the expansiveness of Heian pond gardens, the stark simplicity of Zen aesthetics, and the subtle and restrained elegance of the world of tea. The exquisite use of stones at Katsura, which enriches our physical and visual experience of space, remains unparalleled in Japanese landscape history.



Modern stone gardens

A number of modern landscape architects continue to experiment with the use of stones. Mirei Shigemori (1896–1975), a landscape architect and scholar who trained in painting, flower arrangement, and the art of the tea ceremony, created numerous dry landscape gardens that are both novel yet traditional in design. Among other projects, he collaborated with Isamu Noguchi in choosing stones for the UNESCO garden in Paris.

Shigemori's masterpiece, the gardens at Tofuku-ji in Kyoto (1939), consists of four independent parts. In the south garden, four stone groupings amidst white sand represent four mythic islands of Chinese legend (*Hojo*, *Horai*, *Eishu*, and *Koryo*), and five moss-covered mounds symbolize the five Zen sects of Kyoto. In the west garden, stone curbs create a checkerboard

Garden at Tofuku-ji.

grid pattern that is filled in with white sand and shaped azaleas. The north garden contains the famous grid of square stones embedded in green moss; it was inspired by the grid pattern on the sliding doors in the teahouses at Katsura Rikyu and Shugakuin Rikyu. In the east garden, stones placed in a cloud-shaped area of white sand represent the constellation of the Big Dipper.

Shunmyo Masuno (1953–), a Zen priest and landscape architect, has published widely on garden design and created numerous gardens in Japan and abroad. His overseas works include the Zen garden at the Canadian Museum of Civilization in Ottawa (1995), Taunustor Japan Center in Frankfurt (1996), the Japanese garden at Berlin Marzahn Erholungspark (2003), and the garden of the University of Bergen, Norway (2003). Of his many landscape architecture projects within Japan, the garden of the Cerulean Tower Tokyu Hotel in Tokyo (2001) is considered among the most powerful. Outside the lounge area is a curving terrace of pale granite ledges lit by concealed lighting. These symbolize waves rolling towards a shore, represented by a “beach” of pebbles and boulders. Around the corner is another stone garden made of slabs of darker granite, some with chiseled surfaces, some polished.

Other noteworthy examples of modern landscape architecture featuring stones are the Stone Plaza in Tochigi (1996–2000) and the Water/Glass House in Atami (1998), both by Kengo Kuma (1954–), and private gardens in Kyoto by Atsushi Akenuki (1947–), including that of the Tsuruya Yoshinobu cake shop. Akenuki was also in charge of the landscaping at the Miho Museum of Art in Shiga (1996).

These Japanese designers create landscapes that are truly modern in form and content. Yet their creations are based on a deep historical understanding that the art of Japanese gardens is first and foremost the art of setting stones. In a broader perspective, when Mirei Shigemori talks of his design philosophy as reconnecting humanity with the primordial force of nature, and Kengo Kuma of making architecture “a frame of nature” to allow us to experience the environment “more deeply and intimately,” we recognize that these designers are striving to recover modern man's relationship with the natural world – a vital and profound endeavor in this anxiety-ridden age. – Natsumi Nonaka

Listening to Stones

In the west of Kyoto, off the main streets that run out from the city center, are stockyards where gardeners come to buy the stuff of their trade. Some yards deal in plants, others in stones; most have a little of both. They are often hard to find at first, lost in the narrow streets, but you'll know one when you see it. Not by the sign out front – there rarely is one – but because of the cluster of leafy heads that pushes up above the surrounding houses: tall green islands in a sea of brown. If you are accustomed to stockyards in America, with their neat rows of uniform, well-tagged material lined up by size and variety, you'll be in for a surprise: it's a bit like a bric-a-brac shop. Plants of all sizes and types are mixed together, with stones, lanterns, and water basins tucked beneath them like chicks and hens. There are no botanical names on plants (Japanese gardeners have no use for Latin) – in fact, there are often no labels at all, not even prices or Japanese names. The lack of labeling is mostly because these yards deal only with the trade, and that sort of information is either unneeded (like the plant names) or varies by customer (like the prices). The hodgepodge arrangement stems partly from the lack of space in Japan, partly because some materials come into the yard bit by bit when old gardens are dismantled, and partly as a means of display. You can hear the owner suggesting, "Doesn't this pine look good next to this maple . . . and what about this stone lantern? Nice match, right?" But what's really interesting about this seemingly haphazard way of laying out the stockyards is not its root cause but what it reveals about the nature of Japanese garden design.

There is a mode of designing in which the designer envisions and plans out every last detail of a design – a controlling or intentional mode, one might say. You can find this approach in many cultures around the world. In Japan,

things designed this way include precisely detailed lacquer boxes, porcelain teacups, and Buddhist temple architecture – not to mention the products of Toyota, Sony, and company. But there is another mode of designing, one that is often associated with traditional Japanese design, that began in the 1500s in cities like Kyoto within the context of the social gatherings we now call the tea ceremony. In this mode the designer does not try to control every aspect of the design but instead revels in the unexpected serendipity of the process of creation. Wood-fired pottery is a good example, where the magic of the kiln adds to what the potter has begun; another is highly curative "grass-script" calligraphy, in which the way the brush opens and streaks is never fully planned out. And, of course, there is garden design.

The reason gardening in Japan falls squarely into the serendipitous mode of designing is that the materials used, being natural and therefore unique, disallow the designer from stipulating entirely what will happen. The designer does not dictate that a stone or tree will be exactly a certain size or shape; instead he only roughs out an idea and then searches for materials with which to work. Perhaps he goes to a stockyard like the ones in the west of Kyoto. Some of the

The empty space of the garden, referred to as "ma," is purposefully carved out by the design of the moss areas. Spiral Garden, K-Residence, Kyoto.



materials he finds are natural – wild, you could say – like boulders taken from rivers or mountains. Others are shaped by the human hand, like carefully pruned pines and maples. But all of them share one important aspect: they are unique specimens, no two the same. As these diverse pieces are found, and then gathered to the site, the design shifts to accommodate their various "capabilities." The pine, perhaps, is a little larger and more canted than what the designer imagined. Fine. Everything just slides over a bit. The stone chosen for beneath the pine is weak on one side, but that can be balanced by placing another stone next to it. In this mode of designing, the garden is not entirely created within the designer's mind and then actualized. Rather, to some degree, it is suggested by the materials themselves.

This concept was described in an eleventh-century gardening treatise called the *Sakuteiki*, which translates literally as Records on Garden Making. I call it The Art of Setting Stones because the expression used in the treatise to mean "garden making" was "setting stones." In the *Sakuteiki*, the reader is advised that when placing stones, the most important stone of an arrangement should be set first and all the other stones that are to be set afterwards should be set in accordance with this first stone. The author expressed this as "following the request of the stone," suggesting that it was not the aesthetic of the designer that was important; rather it was the inherent nature of the material that called for a certain design to flow from it. In other words, the act of gardening was not simply an exercise in design. It was in fact a method of nature study, a practice that asked the designer to look carefully at the world and understand things from the material's point of view.

Listening to the stones – that is, designing "from the material's point of view" – was one of the things I learned by working in Japan for many years. This has become a foundation of the way I design. Another was to work with a very limited palette. In many parts of the world, the garden is seen as a place to gather the bounty of the natural world. The beautiful arrangement of a wide variety of natural elements, especially plants – carefully balancing their forms, textures, and colors – is considered key to a good design. Nowadays, gathering the bounty of nature is increasingly being replaced by gathering

The palette of the garden is kept very simple: green in the moss and mountain laurel, tan from the wooden fence, and tones of the stone lantern, water basin and river jacks. Water-Stone Garden, B-Residence, Darien, Connecticut.



the bounty of genetic modification as people cast about for the latest horticultural varieties, but the design mode remains the same: the display of bounty. To some degree this was also true in Japan – long, long ago, back when the *Sakuteiki* was written. Yet ever since the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, under the influence of the severe ethos of the newly empowered military class, as well as the Zen Buddhist predilection for stripping away outward appearances to reveal inner truths, garden design became increasingly rarefied.

This can be seen in many of the other arts of Japan, too. Haiku poetry, for instance, reduces expression to just seventeen syllables. Flower arranging, or *ikebana*, usually involves only one stem each of three species, and in some cases only a single stem with a bud yet to bloom. The utter simplicity of the flower arrangement draws the viewer in and encourages close examination, the way a person who whispers often attracts attention. The stillness created by the act of simplification allows one to perceive details that would otherwise be overlooked. This mode of designing is not just an aesthetic; it is a method of heightening awareness, of understanding the nature of Nature.

Garden design works in a similar way. The gardens designed as entry spaces for the tea ceremony, for instance, which are called *roji*, or pathways, contain no flowers because they would detract from the experience to come. The sixteenth-century tea treatise, *Usoshû*, states that in the tea gar-

den, “no grasses or trees are planted, no stones are set, no sand has been spread, and no small stones are laid out as groundcover. In this way, the attention of the guest is not distracted and . . . they put their spirit into the tea gathering.” The simplification of design is not simply an elegant and reserved sense of taste (although that is one way to look at it); rather it is a way of opening up the senses of those who pass through the garden so that they will be more highly

aware of the subtleties of the experience that awaits them. By designing with a simplified palette, a quiet space is created that lends itself to contemplation so that the garden not only pleases but also inherently encourages philosophic reflection and poetic interpretation.

An interesting comparison with Western garden design can be seen in the way plants are treated – in particular, those that, like the Japanese maple, bear the label “Japanese.” In any green garden you visit in Japan (for there are some with no green at all), chances are you will find a Japanese maple. If you do, it will be *Acer palmatum*: green-leaved, upright, and as close to a wild maple as you can get. Red-leaved? Cut-leaved? Variegated? Weeping? Dwarf? These varieties are not used at all. Not in Japan. It is telling that the same plant has been perceived so differently. In Japan the maple is appreciated as a poetical emblem of the changing seasons, especially as an indicator of autumn. Any wild maple will do fine for that role; in fact, the

wilder the better. In the West the Japanese maple is seen as a trophy plant, an object rather than a symbol, and the wild, green Japanese maple is only used as rootstock.

The previously mentioned haiku poetry touches on a third thing that has stuck with me from my time in Japan. As mentioned, the haiku has only seventeen syllables, broken into three stanzas. The expression that results is only the suggestion of a poetic image, just a hint without any fleshing out of the details. By paring things down, the poet leaves ample room for the reader (or listener) to fill in what has not been written. A highly abbreviated poetic form like haiku inherently engages its readers, encouraging them to participate in the poem by finishing it, or expanding on it, themselves. The simplification is not just a tricky exercise in seeing how much can be expressed with how little (although certainly that, too, is part of it); it is a way of drawing the reader into the creative process.

Likewise a garden that is designed in this manner – quiet, simple, unassertive – engages those people who experience the



The pattern of the stepping stone path was not designed in the studio, but developed after the individual pieces were collected and considered. Tea Garden, Hiden-in Temple, Kyoto.

garden and encourages them to continue the creative process themselves. The clearest examples of this way of designing are the gardens called *karesansui*, which are made of stones set in raked sand. The word *karesansui* is written with three characters meaning dry-mountain-water. “Mountain-water” is a way of saying nature, or landscape; “dry” simply refers to the fact that no actual water was used in building the garden. These gardens are images of wild nature, islands in the sea, or mountain ranges peeking above a layer of clouds. They are in no way meant to be literal depictions of a landscape, like scale models built to film a movie. Rather they are abstractions in which the various parts of the garden symbolically represent whole swaths of the world. A single stone is a mountain; three stones make an archipelago; a few yards of raked sand becomes the ocean; a single aged pine is an endless forest.

In between the stones in the garden – or the aged pine, or whatever other few elements are used to compose the arrangement – are large areas that are left seemingly empty. They may be spread with white sand or covered with moss or some other simple treatment. In Japan these empty spaces are referred to with the deceptively simple word *ma*, meaning a pause, a physical or temporal space. The portions left unpainted in an ink landscape painting, a period of quiet time in a musical score, still moments in the movement of a Noh theater actor are all referred to as *ma*. This emptiness, however, is not something left out or left over; rather it is specifically created by taking truly empty space, or time, and punctuating it with certain sparse elements. The spaces framed by those punctuations constitute the *ma* and it is within those spaces that the mind can wander, filling in the unpainted landscape, the unexpressed music, or the part of the garden that waits to be completed.

Listening to the materials, using a simple palette, leaving emptiness within a design. Of the many aspects of Japanese culture that have become part of me and the way I design, these three stand out as the most influential on my work. What is important to me about them is that they are not just ways of creating a clean look (although that is part of it – have I mentioned that before?). They are methods for increasing awareness. Not just ways of designing, but ways of learning to see. – Marc Peter Keane

Tea and Sympathy: A Zen Approach to Landscape Gardening

On a beautiful day this past spring, I drove to the north shore of Long Island to meet with Stephen Morrell, director of the John P. Humes Japanese Stroll Garden in Locust Valley. The garden, situated among several old, Gold Coast estates, consists of four acres of steep, wooded hillside carved out of a corner of the family property inherited by Humes’s wife, Jean. Its origin was the purchase in 1960 of a *shoin-zukuri*-style Japanese teahouse from Gracie Orientalia, a New York firm specializing in Asian décor, following a trip the couple had taken to Kyoto where they had fallen in love with Japanese gardens. The challenge they now faced was how to create an appropriate setting for it.

They discovered living nearby a Japanese couple who had set up a landscape-gardening practice on Long Island after being released from a World War II internment camp. The couple framed the teahouse with specimen plantings of evergreens and bamboos and laid out white gravel paths. In addition, they created a *kamejia*, a tortoise-shaped composition of shrubs and rocks symbolizing longevity, a traditional element of Japanese imperial gardens. They reshaped the pond, which sits in a hollow below the teahouse, into its present configuration of a gourd, echoing the ponds found in old, Heian-era gardens. Rocks were grouped into forms that had symbolical associations. For example, one group brings to mind a crane, a bird representing immortality. But the Humeses had no further design and maintenance plan



Stephen Morrell

for the property and because John Humes was an ambassador living abroad during the Nixon and Ford administrations, the garden around the teahouse received only routine maintenance from his estate gardener.

Upon his return to this country in the late 1970s, Humes, who took primary responsibility for the project, hired a local landscaping firm in an attempt to reverse a ten-year period of neglect. The manner in which the horticultural crew vigorously pruned the trees and shrubs near the teahouse and suppressed the weedy overgrowth with plastic sheeting was alien to the Japanese aesthetic, to say the least. In fact, Humes had far more ambitious plans: he wanted to not only restore and expand the original garden, but also open it to the public.

Fortunately, in his search to find someone who could transform the property and realize this ideal, he met Stephen Morrell.

Morrell’s path to the Humes Stroll Garden and his own design practice (his firm is called Contemplative Landscapes) began in Fall River, Massachusetts, where he spent his childhood next to a forest preserve in which he played every day. “The forest gives you sense of place and an aesthetic context through its tree structure, leaf texture, and characteristics of light,” he explained when I spoke with him during my visit to the garden. “I feel at home in the Eastern deciduous woodland; I am most at peace there.” His father, a leader of the

Operating Engineers Union, had pursued a career in his own father’s line of work, and he urged his sons to do the same. Two of them complied, but Morrell, remembering the vegetable garden he had planted and tended as a boy, knew with an unusual degree of certainty for a teenager what he wanted to do instead. To please his father, he worked summers on a construction crew and trained for a year after high school in how to handle heavy construction equipment. “That experience provided an understanding of landscape grading and drainage,” he told me, “but I knew where my heart was, so I

naturally gravitated toward being a gardener. My dad couldn't understand why. He told me that gardening was just a hobby."

In 1978, when he was twenty-two and had begun to train for his chosen career, Morrell met Ralph Hartman, a landscape architect whose designs had a Japanese sensibility. Hartman encouraged him to enroll in the New York Botanical Garden's School of Professional Horticulture, and there he heard about the job opportunity Humes was offering. At the time Morrell had his sights set on an internship in Europe after graduation. Nevertheless, because of his interest in the Japanese landscape aesthetic, he met with Humes, who must have been impressed with the young man. "He did the most amazing thing," Morrell recalled. "He trusted me with the garden's future and said he would put things on hold for a year until I got back." His time abroad began in Belgium, where he trained with Jelena de Belder at Arboretum Kalmthout and continued at Les Bois des Moutiers, the extraordinary Olmstedian-cum-Arts-and-Crafts garden in Varengeville-sur-Mer on the Normandy coast.

Upon his return in 1982, Morrell set about developing the garden according to his own evolving aesthetic. The challenge he faced was learning how to improve on the design of the Japanese gardeners who had formed the pond and landscape surrounding the teahouse and to wed it with the surrounding woodland in order to create a seamless whole. To do this successfully he felt he needed to learn more about Japanese culture. "I came of age in the seventies," he told me, "so the culture of Eastern philosophy was in the air, but it wasn't until I came here that I became a practitioner of Zen and incorporated meditation into my life." At the Zen Mountain Monastery, located on a 230-acre forest preserve in the Catskills, he found a master with whom he studied *zazen*, the formal practice of seated meditation. During this period of self-education he also studied the art of tea ceremony at the Urasenke Chanoyu Center of New York, a branch of the Urasenke Konnichian in Kyoto. At the same time that Morrell was beginning his immersion in the Zen Buddhist ethos, he was developing his vision for the garden. Humes approved of his ideas and sought to ensure the garden's future by redirecting the entire annual income of his family foundation to its support.

Since my visit coincided with one of the frequent group tours Morrell gives, I was invited to observe the tea ceremony he had planned as the culmination of a guided stroll along white gravel paths and moss-encrusted stones leading up and down the steep hillside on which the teahouse (*chashitsu*) sits on its platform. Beside the entrance to the defined space that sets the teahouse apart from the rest of the garden, he directed our attention to the *tsukubai*, a large standing stone with its top scooped to form a basin from which he ladled water, explaining how the host and the guests (normally around four) purify their hands upon first entering a tea garden. Now, because of the number of members of the visiting garden club, he was serving only the chairman, who knelt in the teahouse with expectant curiosity. The rest of us stood outside the walls of shoji screens, which had been slid open so we could observe the ceremony. "The purpose is to cultivate presence, moments of awareness," he told us.

It seemed incongruous at first to see a tall, muscular gardener dressed in work clothes performing a ritual more frequently associated with petite, kimono-clad women. With precise and practiced motions he began serving the garden club chairman while explaining the significance of each gesture and stage of the tea presentation. He stepped onto a tatami mat in the serving space with a white linen cloth (*chakin*)

over one wrist that he would later use to wipe out the beautiful ceramic tea bowl (*chawan*) he held in his hands. A slender bamboo tea scoop (*chashaku*) rested across the top of the tea bowl. In the bowl was a small whisk (*chasen*) with which he would stir the special green powdered tea (*matcha*) used for the tea ceremony. He placed these next to a water container and then went back to the preparation area at the back of the room. He returned holding a large stoneware vessel for the waste water (*kensui*), a bamboo water ladle (*hishaku*), and a green bamboo rest for the kettle lid (*futaoki*). He next wiped the tea container and scoop, afterwards folding a silk cloth (*fukusa*) used for this purpose with meditative concentration. Then he ladled hot water, which had been boiling over a small brazier, into the tea bowl, rinsed the whisk, emptied the bowl, and wiped it clean. Following these preparations, he scooped tea into the tea bowl, poured in a little water, whisked the mixture into a paste, added more water, and continued whisking to create a thick frothy tea broth. Bowing, he placed the bowl in front of his hesitant guest, who was waiting for cues as to what she should do next. Morrell instructed her to rotate the bowl in her hands in order to admire its rustic beauty before she drank. Bowing after she had, he rose from his tatami mat and disappeared again, returning with a small plate of sweets. At the conclusion of a few sips and nibbles, denoting her participation in the meal, he accepted the tea bowl from her, rinsed it and the whisk, and cleaned the tea container. All of this was done slowly, implicitly encouraging her to quietly admire the objects that were now being put away.

After the group left, Morrell and I walked through the garden as he explained what he and his



Japanese teahouse, John P. Humes
Japanese Stroll Garden, Locust
Valley.

crew of two other gardeners do. The bulk of the work consists of “adjusting and responding to the things nature throws your way.” Tip-pruning and redistributing gravel are necessary routine tasks, but the most important one by far is grooming moss, the soft emerald carpet that is the quintessence of a Japanese garden and the glory of a natural woodland as well. “The importance of moss,” Morrell said, “is that it provides horizontal continuity and depth to the ground plane. Moss is so lush, and when you have something in such mass and are looking at this expanse of continuous green growth, your connection to it feels immediate and direct.”

I noticed that the moss was differently textured in places and assumed that there must be three or four species. When I asked if this were true, Morrell replied, “There are more than eleven in the garden of the four hundred found throughout New York State. Moss is a whole plant world unto itself.” To explore it in depth he returned to the New York Botanical Garden, where he learned to identify moss by the cell structure of its leaves in cross-section under a microscope. As I bent down to stroke a piece of the furry green carpet, he told me that this moss was *Plageoniam*, the dominant species in the garden because it will grow anywhere except on rocks. Then there is *Thuidium*, a sodlike mat. Although moss can spread quickly, it will die if it is covered with leaves or twigs, and goes dormant without consistent moisture, turning an unattractive dull yellowish green.

When the arrival of a tour is imminent, Morrell and his crew give the garden’s ground plane a once-over with rakes, but when they have time they brush the moss with dust brooms. Moss also needs weeding, a task that emphatically calls for the Zen virtue of patience. Yet to kneel with one’s face close to its surface and pluck the tiny weeds that sprout amidst its conglomeration of inconspicuous leaves, aware of the odor of moist earth, can be intensely satisfying. Morrell said, “That sensory experience – the smell, the touch, the lush green color – is life-affirming.”

For him, moss weeding offers an opportunity to practice meditation. “Zen practice,” he said, “is about constantly cultivating your ability to be fully present, to eliminate the gap that occurs when you check out mentally. It requires that you return to the task at hand whether it is sitting meditation or

weeding. The message is there is no place to get to in your life except here and now.” He tries to carry this over into the less serene moments of life: working with clients, being a father, commuting between Connecticut and Long Island. He says it is sometimes difficult but that “you can cultivate a sense of presence even in these things if you let go of self-attachment. The important thing is to be attentive, aware, present, and to embrace the moment, whatever it is.”

The garden is for Morrell a means of personal transcendence: “Remove the subject-object duality and you become what you are doing,” he remarked. “That’s what the act of gardening does for me. It is about finding joy in the simplest things. The Japanese call it *wabi sabi*. Wabi has a subjective orientation; it fosters spirituality based on meeting basic needs with minimal means and savoring the economy and purity of a bare-bones existence. Sabi is more objective and refers to an appreciation of the humblest articles of everyday life, seeing beauty in imperfection, understatement, the unexpected, asymmetry, and the effects of aging and weathering.”

I asked him how one can retain this admirable perspective in such an environmentally troubled age as the one we live in. Morrell agreed that contemporary humanity is devaluing nature as a source of spiritual nourishment by making it something apart, rather than a part of us. But he remains optimistic, believing that change will occur if enough people bear witness to the possibility of a cultural shift by caring intimately for a plot of land. “The Zen way is not the only way. A vegetable patch will do. The garden is a metaphor,” he concluded. “If you are a gardener, you are a witness to the necessity for stewardship, caring for the earth.” – Elizabeth Barlow Rogers

The John P. Humes Japanese Stroll Garden, a preservation project of The Garden Conservancy, is open to the public on weekends from late April through October. For more information visit: www.gardenconservancy.org/newpages/features.php

Fair Japan: Japanese Gardens at American World’s Fairs, 1876–1940

Between the Civil War and World War II, world’s fairs were enormously influential in shaping American popular culture and attitudes. The Ferris wheel, the ice cream cone, and the hot dog are all said to have debuted at fairs, and these international expositions were no less momentous for developments in gardening and botany. At the first American fair, held in Philadelphia in 1876, the U.S. Department of Agriculture exhibited lawns and lawn-care “arrangements” to propagate the idea of the grass lawn as a distinctive feature of the American residential yard. For that same exposition, the Japanese brought along the kudzu vine.

The 1876 fair also witnessed the construction of the first “Japanese garden” in North America. The success of this garden spawned a long series of such gardens at world’s fairs in America, each conceived as a cultural artifact and received as an exotic aesthetic import. Yet, for the sponsor of these landscapes – Japan’s imperial government, formed in 1868 – each garden was also intended to create an image of Japan that served a subtle but significant political goal.

The gardens at these grand events constituted the first, largest, most-visited, and best-publicized examples of Japanese landscape design abroad. Built primarily by workers from Japan and sponsored by the Japanese government, effectively the gardens were authorized; the ostensible authenticity of their materials, designs, and meanings was guaranteed by dint of official patronage and genuine craftsmanship. From the start then, the act of making a “Japanese garden” outside Japan had immense legitimacy and prestige.

Because many of the structures and even some of the plants were later incorporated into commercial, civic, or private gardens, these exposition gardens had extensive second lives. For instance, the Japanese Village at the California Mid-Winter Exposition (1894) became San Francisco’s famous Golden Gate Park Japanese Tea Garden, and the success of that garden, in turn, led to a string of commercial tea gardens in California operated by G. T. Marsh. The lavish pond-style stroll gardens surrounded by pavilions that were built for many of the expositions – derived from Edo period *daimyo* stroll gardens, as revived in the Meiji era – were also imitated, both in the many Japanese-style gardens built at the estates of America’s economic elite before World War II and in civic gardens after

it. Finally, many of the carpenters and garden builders who came to America to work on fair gardens also remained in the country and contributed to other garden projects.

International expositions served as an opportunity for Japan to export desired aesthetic and cultural values. What has been less recognized is that fair gardens were also important ideological tools. The fairs themselves were microcosms of international relations in the competitive age when mature industrialization met late colonialism. In this highly charged atmosphere, the meanings formed through Japanese gardens and the rhetoric associated with them were inherently political. As idealized representations of a pre-modern Japan in the modern West, the gardens were intended to portray the country as a tranquil, artistic, and beautiful land – a nation that, despite its contemporary outward show of modernity, mechanization, and militarization, was at heart a kind of pre-modern utopia where old values still held sway, where craftsmanship was the rule, and where beauty seemed to spring from both the land itself and the fingers of its people. At the fairs, Japanese gardens featured architecture in styles redolent of the past as well as actual objects that were legitimately old – usually stone lanterns and bonsai. Oases of greenery inset with ponds and streams, the gardens provided an undeniable visual and mental respite that was often linked more broadly with Japanese culture in official descriptions of the gardens.

Set against the hard-edged physical and ideological environments of the fairs, the Japanese gardens seemed soft and cool, sanctuaries for body and mind. And in contrast to the aggressive modernity that was the hallmark of many countries' exhibits, Japan created a self-image linked to the past. The official Japanese poster at the 1939 New York World's Fair begins, "Changeless, timeless Japan . . . Its enduring charm takes place naturally in 'The World of Tomorrow.'" It concludes, "When the Fair's modern world bewilders you, remember – and enjoy – the Japanese Pavilion."

If the concept of the Japanese garden was created in the official discourse (that of both the exposition organizers and the Japanese government), it was disseminated by the popular press, which brought visual and verbal descriptions of these gardens to the entire nation. The gardens were subsequently analyzed in books and articles. Typically the Japanese-style garden built at each fair was simply called The Japanese Garden, or other non-historically specific variants such as The Imperial Japanese Garden. And just as most non-Japanese still lump together the diverse history of Japanese gardens into the total-

Japanese Pavilion, Chicago World's Fair, 1893.

izing term "the Japanese garden," so too do the placards and pamphlets at modern Japanese-style gardens still tend to favor grandiose, ahistorical statements linking aspects of Japanese garden design to eternal verities of Japanese culture. The cultural assumptions embedded in the Japanese gardens at the fairs are still very much alive.

Performing on the World Stage

For most viewers, world's fairs were entertainment. But for the governments investing their resources and prestige, fairs functioned as a kind of theater in which each nation played a differ-

ent role, like an actor upon a stage. Often national participation at fairs assumed an hourglass-like configuration: powerful nations were abundant, weaker Western countries rarely participated, and what is now called the "third world" was well represented. The presence of dominant nations was intended to signal progress, power, and pride. If second-tier nations were represented at all, they usually made token appearances. Occupying the lowest rung on the ladder of international status were the territorial colonies of Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. They did not control their own presentation at the fairs but were represented by their conquerors as trophies of conquest and evidence of empire. Perhaps the most striking example of this practice was at the 1900 *Exposition Universelle* in Paris, where the French displayed their imperial possessions and ambitions through replicas of monuments from their colonial holdings, including Angkor Wat and a Siamese pavilion.



Within this brutal power dynamic, Japan occupied a singular position, and its rulers consciously exploited its uniqueness to craft a complex message in which gardens played a key role. Because of its status as an Asian country, Japan was considered one of the backward nations of the world, part of the static, passive, and mute Orient against which the dynamic nations of the Occident measured their power and progress. Certainly at the first fairs where Japan participated – Paris (1867), Vienna (1873), and Philadelphia (1876) – it was perceived as a quaint and exotic land just emerging from centuries of sleep. Yet by the middle of the 1890s, the era when America's great fairs began in earnest, Japan was fast becoming a Western-style colonial power. As the Great Empire of Japan, the small island nation was rapidly industrializing at home and creating its own dominion in Asia.

In a series of striking coincidences, the largest American fairs occurred during Japan's wars or other critical moments in foreign policy. The Chicago Columbian Fair of 1893 took place on the cusp of the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–95. San Francisco's Mid-Winter Exposition occurred during the conflict itself, and the St. Louis Louisiana Purchase Exposition

marked the beginning of the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–05. The four fairs on the Pacific Coast between 1907 and 1915 coincided with anti-Japanese immigration sentiment in the United States and agitation for legislation to limit the rights of Japanese immigrants and eventually bar them altogether. Chicago's Century of Progress Exposition in 1933 followed Japan's invasion of Manchuria in 1931 and coastal China in 1932. And to cap this remarkable chronological convergence of Japanese imperial expansion and the nation's presentation of itself in America, the fairs in San Francisco and New York (both 1939–40) took place during Japan's "Sacred War" in China – a prelude to the eventual "Greater East Asia War" with the United States and Britain. To read newspapers that were published during the run of these fairs is to experience two different views of the world. Whereas the front-page headlines devoted to military and political battles suggest a Japan marked by turmoil, the pictures and descriptions of the Japanese pavilions and gardens at the expositions evoke a land of timeless tranquility.

Several theorists have examined the ways in which world's fair expositions were a part of the "apparatus of representation" in the creation of modern consumerism, nationalism, and imperialism, and noted their role within the discourse of Orientalism. But these critiques apply differently to Japan, because – although the country was "opened" by western military force – the Japanese were never colonial subjects. On the contrary, they were successful colonizers. As such, the national identity "performed" by Japan was a complex synthesis of opposing roles.

This hybrid presentation was facilitated by the heterogeneous space of the fairs, where nations were offered several stages on which to display their national narratives. A foreign country could acquire space within multiple exhibition halls and also lease a parcel of land on which to build its national pavilion. Japan used both venues to the fullest advantage: at the major American fairs, it was either the largest or second-largest renter of space in the halls dedicated to industry, agriculture, education, and so

on, presenting its latest achievements in art and technology. In these crowded, competitive arenas, Japan demonstrated that it was no backward nation but instead would soon rival the nations of North America and Europe in social progress, economic might, and military influence.

When it came to building a *national* pavilion, however, Japan presented itself in very different terms. Whereas many other nations linked themselves wholly with progress by constructing national pavilions in contemporary styles, Japan steadfastly embodied itself in historicizing structures set in lavish gardens. In contrast to the material and social progress indicated by the displays in the exhibition halls, here the message was of ostensible oriental stasis, where Japan epitomized Asian tranquility, tradition, and beauty. If the Japan displayed in the exhibition halls was masculine and westernizing, the Japan glimpsed at the national pavilions was feminine and orientaling. Although the two images acted in concert throughout the fair as a whole, when Japan had to be reduced to a single image it was the feminine land of tradition that prevailed.

This image constituted Japan's dominant or core identity at the fairs for at least two reasons. First and most obviously, the picture of Japan as traditional was associated with the national pavilion, the essential representation for each country. Second, while displays of Japan's modernity were dispersed to various exhibition halls and might easily be confused with similar products or systems from other nations, the display of enduring tradition was concentrated in the self-contained space that was distinctly Japanese. Thus Japan seemed western and competitive in connection with other nations, but at home and on her own terms in her national space, she conveyed a much more congenial and distinctly nonthreatening visage. While the Japanese presence at the fairs was both masculine and

feminine, the feminine identity was implied to be the truer one. In addition to, or perhaps in spite of, the proud evidence of Japanese mechanical, mercantile, and military might, the message intentionally promoted by the Japanese pavilion and attached garden was that Japan remained artistic,

agrarian, and feminine – in essence, peaceful.

By positioning Japanese identity in a garden, and by positioning the garden as a quintessential expression of Japanese culture, the Japanese government skillfully linked Japaneseness and gardens – at once demonstrating a living cultural tradition and "naturalizing" the highly political message being propagated. This was not a simple device born of the positive response of Westerners to Japanese gardens, although that quickly became part of the equation; it was an attempt to suggest the inherent character or "nature" of the Japanese as a people and Japan as a nation. In essence, if through gardens (and the explanatory texts surrounding them) we could witness the love of nature in Japanese culture, then it was a short jump to the idea that present-day Japan and its political system were themselves natural and proper. In the neat tautology of one exposition pamphlet from 1940, "Japan is ever true to its eternal nature." This insistent message indicates the insecurity on both domestic and international fronts of the new imperial regime, itself created only at the time of the first nineteenth-century fairs and reaching its zenith contemporaneously with the last great fairs in 1940. Anxious about its past and for its future, the Japanese government felt compelled to present itself as inevitable and enduring, a refined force of nature that found easy expression in lavish gardens.

Fair Japan

The official Japanese garden at each fair was usually not the only Japanese garden there. In the commercial entertainment zones located just outside the exposition gates, Japanese entrepreneurs invariably constructed a Japanese enclave to compete with such attractions as the Bavarian Beer Garden or Streets of Cairo. Run by businessmen like the ubiquitous Yumindo Kushibiki (1859–1924), who constructed a commercial Japanese garden near the Boardwalk at Atlantic City and even a Japanese tea garden on the rooftop of the original Madison Square Garden, they were small and undeniably commercial, often squeezed between a restaurant and theater or bazaar.

It is tempting to divide and oppose these two types of Japanese fair gardens as official and unofficial representations, and see the small sideshow gardens as an expression of the subversive heterogeneity of fairs. Yet the commercial gardens



The Japanese Garden, Japanese Pavilion, Golden Gate Exposition, San Francisco, 1939.

helped to underscore the dominant rhetoric of the Japanese national pavilion. For instance, photos and postcards of these gardens usually feature women – geisha in the terminology of the time – posing in front of an arched bridge or miniature stream. This feminization of gardens, and by extension the projection of a nonthreatening message for the entire country, reinforced the underlying theme conveyed at the official Japanese pavilions.

One could even argue that these commercial spaces were more effective agents for Japan's national interests precisely because they were not associated with the Japanese government. The complex political expedience of their existence is indicated by the name that was used for most of them: Fair Japan. At a minimum, Fair Japan was a clever play on words, suggesting swiftness of mind and familiarity with the English language. Most obviously, it asserted that Japan was both a beautiful country and a virtuous one. The verbal conflation of aesthetics and ethics in the pun on "fair" strengthened the often stated link between Japan's physical attractiveness and the equally appealing content of its society and culture. If gardens at international expositions were intended to display Japan's national identity, then the fundamental nature of that identity was manifest in the physical forms of the gardens, in the propagandizing name Fair Japan, and in the way that most exposition gardens were used.

Gardens as Performance Art

If, among such familiar aesthetic constructions as painting and architecture, gardens are particularly performative because they call for bodily engagement within a dynamic environment, then the Japanese gardens at world's fairs are masterly examples of landscape as performance art. They were created for a public audience, meant to entertain and, in so doing, to persuade. In keeping with these goals, they were often overtly theatrical in style and function. And, if we believe contemporary descriptions, they were carried out with a surpassing technical and artistic skill that became part of the message of Japanese ingenuity put to essentially peaceable ends.

Like most performances, the gardens were temporary, yet their goal was to establish a lasting impression of Japan in the minds of those who visited. They were meant both to commemorate a specific event – Japan's participation at a particular exposition – and more importantly to instill a perduring image of the modern Japanese nation and its unchanging culture. In essence, their function was to construct and simulta-

neously commemorate the very idea of Japaneseness. In many ways, the gardens and their architecture were intended to portray Japan's history as a smooth, homogenous prologue to the modern moment. In these prismatic spaces, the country's dark and confused condition, in which the tribulations of war, political and social upheaval, and the feelings of national inferiority weighed heavily on politicians and business leaders, was clarified and projected. By distilling an equally murky national history through the filter of a living landscape architectural tradition and laudatory texts, Japan could lay claim to a glorious past that informed the present and suggested a radiant future under imperial rule.

Meaning was created through and between the formal features of the gardens and the writings for and about them. It was also performed literally, in that most gardens were used to host a variety of spectacles. These events could include speeches by dignitaries, fashion shows, Japan Day parades and festivals, exhibitions of Japanese dance and drama, and even the screening of films. More subtly but no less importantly, publicity photos meant to emphasize the gardens' beauty and serenity were often animated by the inclusion of Japanese women clad in kimonos. This presence of figures costumed in historical dress was key, for it indicates that the gardens were not passive or neutral spaces; rather they were stages for activities which underscored the associations intended by the design and articulated through various scripts.

The garden at the main Japanese exhibition site also served as a transitional space that visitors were made to experience before reaching the national pavilion where the government formally presented a contemporary image of the country in photos, dioramas, and other displays. As with the roji or tea garden, through which guests pass before entering the tea-house, the Japanese world's fair gardens first sought to divest the visitor of his prior conceptions by presenting an environment that was so idiosyncratic, so self contained, and so perfect in its execution as to suspend disbelief. In this way, they softened up the visitor for the hard sell to follow. These suggestions – that a garden distilled the fundamental characteristics of Japan and that Japan itself was a garden – were cleverly integrated into the pavilions, especially those constructed in the late 1930s whose dominant interior images were of Japanese landscapes and women.

In The Wake of Exposition Gardens

Given the concurrent histories of Japan's popular success at American world's fairs and, from around 1913 at least, the deteriorating relations between Japan and the United States that culminated in the ferocious Pacific War and atomic bomb, we might conclude that the propagandistic use of fair gardens had no positive political effects in the long term. Although Americans were charmed by Japanese culture and gardens, this fascination was quickly separated from admiration for Japan once it became a serious economic and military threat. The American acceptance of the fantasy of a feminine-pastoral-historic Japan was easily detached from political views of the nation precisely because the fantasy was so manifestly a day-dream. Moreover, when political push came to military shove, Japan was discredited further for having duped the American people with a false image.

Yet the real question is whether such propagandistic efforts altered history in less obvious ways by delaying actions to counter Japanese aggression. It is not far-fetched to imagine that the degree to which Theodore Roosevelt supported Japan in the Russo-Japanese War was influenced by the Japanese displays at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in 1904, and that Franklin Roosevelt's reluctance to embargo Japan until the summer of 1941 was affected by Japan's large-scale involvement in the fairs in New York and San Francisco in 1939 and 1940. Because Japan participated on a massive scale and presented a compelling image at America's fairs, she created an aura of goodwill that was eroded more slowly than otherwise might have been the case.

One indication of the effects of this sustained campaign is the relatively rapid reappearance of Japanese-style gardens in America after the war. The speedy revival of political and cultural relations with a former enemy was built on a foundation laid before the war via such things as Japan's exposition gardens. In a new age of "Cold War Orientalism," Japanese gardens were soon built in American residential and business settings. Moreover, direct echoes of fair gardens are to be found in sister-city displays and theme parks like Disney World and Sea World.

The fact that we again think of the Japanese garden as an aesthetic import devoid of political implications is, paradoxically, a measure of its continuing success as a form of propaganda. Yet perhaps the deepest legacy of prewar fair gardens in their demonstration that American public space could be culturally diverse. Unlike the chinoiserie of earlier periods, this manifestation of Asian culture had a certain weight and dimension, and it had to be taken on at least an approximation of its own terms. Asia had become a part of the American urban landscape. – Kendall H. Brown

Frank Lloyd Wright and the Aesthetics of Japan

Japanese aesthetics have long held an attraction for the West. The consequences of Commodore Perry's opening of Japan in 1854 soon were felt not only in global commerce, but also in the dissemination of Japanese culture through world's fairs, the sale of woodblock prints, and other means. Josiah Conder, a young British architect who moved to Japan in 1877, both brought western skills to his own architectural practice in his new country of residence and spread Japanese aesthetics abroad. In the twentieth century, despite World War II, Western appreciation for these aesthetics increased, and they became increasingly influential and widespread.

Although the Japanese garden was first appreciated by Westerners merely for its exoticism, its more profound and enduring appeal lies in its quality of abstraction – an abstraction that has resonated strongly with the West's modern sensibility from the mid-nineteenth century through the present. Japanese treatments of form and color and pattern provide the bold, flat surfaces and dynamic, asymmetrical compositions that we associate with modernist visual culture. Japanese art, with its root in spiritual practices, is the perfect Eastern correlative to the West's desire for pure imagery, providing a welcome counterweight to its innate materialism.

And yet charting the influence of Japanese aesthetics on Western design is neither simple nor obvious. Historians and critics have tended to set up a simplistic model based on visual analogy – if A looks like B, then B has influenced A – and such practices lead to reductive explanations of complex phenomena. The meandering nature of influence, like a slow stream accumulating the flotsam of image and word, is ignored, and the phenomenon of parallel development, whereby sources that have no



contact with each other produce nearly identical forms, is neglected. The challenging issues of the artistic transformation of old ideas into new ones are similarly dismissed. From this perspective, the influence of Japanese art and architecture, more particularly its gardens, is not so simple as is claimed by a conventional model of linear influence.

For instance, the architect Walter Gropius (1883–1969), a promoter of functionalist modernism, much esteemed Japanese architecture and its gardens, but it is unclear how their influence manifested itself in his architecture or his numerous ideological writings. On the other hand, although Frank Lloyd Wright (1867–1959), America's most famous twentieth-century architect, denied its direct influence, he nonetheless claimed to have absorbed and transformed Japanese influence in his designs. In 1893 Wright visited the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago; seeing replicas of Japanese temples there opened his eyes to the powers of the *Japonisme* that had blossomed on the Continent and begun to make inroads in the United States. While other young architects dreamed of going to the École des Beaux-Arts or spending time on the Grand Tour, Wright yearned for Japan.

Wright first visited Japan in 1905 in the company of his wife, Kathryn, and a couple who were friends and clients. Among the sites Wright visited were gardens, waterfalls, shrines, and temples, and he documented many of these places with his own photographs. Remarkably he took far more photographs of landscapes and gardens than buildings. Many of these carefully selected views were unusual in terms of subject and composition. Apparently feeling he understood the buildings, he focused on the landscape, trying to capture its ageless magic.

Wright also became an avid collector of Japanese artifacts, particularly ukiyo-e woodblock prints. He would study their use of perspective by attaching pins to key points in the images. While like many Western artists he was primarily interested in their flat asymmetrical compositions, an aesthetic that found expression in his own architectural renderings, they were for him a commodity as well, and he sold them to

clients or used them as collateral for loans. He elaborated their appeal in a short pamphlet, *The Japanese Print*, that is central to understanding a new primitivist phase of his work. According to Wright, Japan, like the cultures of Mesoamerica, China, and southeast Asia, contained the pure sources of form that could inspire a new modern architecture.

For Wright, the archetypal geometries of the circle, square, and triangle that he found in Japanese art corresponded with the spiritual qualities of infinity, integrity, and structural unity, respectively. In their use he sought to provide a means of moving beyond historicist models toward a discovery of the pure origins of creativity itself. Paralleling contemporary European interest in non-Western, primitivist sources, Wright's appropriation and integration of Japanese aesthetics into his own work laid the foundations of a unique branch of modernism.

At the same time, however, Wright was extremely sensitive to any implication that his work was derivative. In 1910, when Charles Robert Ashbee, Wright's friend and an important British Arts and Crafts architect, was asked to write an introduction to a small book of photographs of Wright's buildings, *Ausgeführte Bauten*, he claimed in his essay that Japan had "influenced" Wright. The American was furious and censored Ashbee's remarks when he published the picture book.

Wright had the opportunity of a lifetime when he received the commission in 1913 to design a new Imperial Hotel in Tokyo. Rather than abandoning all ornament as did many European modern architects, here Wright revolutionized its use, making the Imperial Hotel a culmination and testament to his organic philosophy as it had evolved in the previous decade.

Wright made numerous trips to Japan during this period, the last one in 1922. Never again would he visit the country that had so touched his artistic sensibility, but it had a permanent impact on him. His work continued to reverberate with the Japanese aesthetic until the very end of his career. – Anthony Alofsin

Books

The Sun King's Garden: Louis XIV, André Le Nôtre and the Creation of the Garden of Versailles

By Ian Thompson

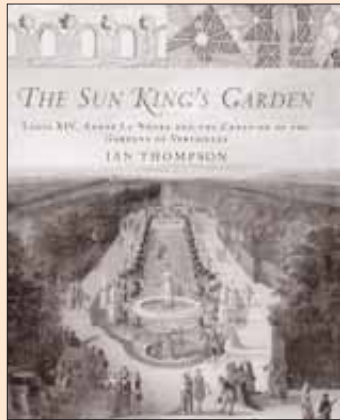
New York: Bloomsbury, 2006

“Warmonger, womanizer, and autocrat, Louis XIV may also have been history’s most fanatical gardener.” Thus begins Ian Thompson’s *The Sun King’s Garden*, setting the tone for this

handsome, ambitious, and well-intended book on the creation of the château and gardens of Versailles. The book is indeed ambitious: Thompson set himself the challenge of synthesizing and condensing the long, complex, and often tedious history of the château into a manageable size and palatable form for the nonspecialist reader.

Certainly the author has done his homework, providing information, anecdotes, and quotable quotes culled from a long list of authoritative works, which he lists in his copious notes and bibli-

ography; perhaps the book’s greatest benefit is his synthesis of recent scholarship on Versailles. Informed, detailed, and animated, his account adds the necessary historical context to bring the story to life, much in the tradition of serious works like Nancy Mitford’s *The Sun King* (1966), Erik Orsenna’s



Le Nôtre: Jardinier du Roi Soleil (2001), and (with a subject closer to home) Witold Rybczynski’s *A Clearing in a Distance: Frederick Law Olmsted and America in Nineteenth*

Century (1999).

At its best, Thompson’s book is an atmospheric account of the colossal enterprise that was the building of Versailles. As the monarch’s principal residence and the eventual seat of government, Versailles is not to be confused with a home. It’s not just the size that sets it apart, it is its singular purpose: to glorify the absolute power and person of the *Roi Soleil*. To the extent the Sun King was synonymous with France, the

creation of Versailles becomes as much a chronicle of seventeenth-century French history as it is the story of one man’s lifelong obsession.

As Thompson notes, Versailles “was not made easily.” Thompson vivifies the exhausting history of Versailles’ creation, demonstrating that even though it was a place for pomp and display, it was a perpetual *chantier*, the French word for a construction site. For half a century, from the early 1660s until his death in 1715, Louis transformed his father’s modest residence at Versailles from a swampy lowland into the largest garden the world had ever seen – and by some accounts, he did so not just once but repeatedly. Louis’s sister-in-law, the Princess Palatine, is quoted as saying “there was not a single spot in Versailles which was not modified ten times.”

In size, opulence, and grandeur, Versailles was and remains without equal. There is only one size at Versailles – huge – and one purpose – to awe and impress. On these criteria, Versailles scored perfectly, but at a cost: the bankruptcy of France. As Thompson demonstrates, the king – much to the chagrin of his supremely able finance minister, Jean-Baptiste Colbert – was never daunted by expense or, for that matter,

by the seemingly impossible. For example, Louis was a fanatical fountain fancier and squandered vast sums filling Versailles with these works of art and hydraulics. Yet, as good as Louis’s hydraulic engineers were, they were incapable of providing a water supply equal to requirements. Not even the “Machine de Marly,” which pumped water from the Seine to Versailles, could satisfy the demand. To remedy the shortfall, a plan was devised to divert waters to Versailles from the Eure River, some 60 miles distant. But even with the supervision of France’s best military engineer, Sébastien Vauban, and the army’s manpower (22,000 in 1686 alone), not a drop of Eure water ever reached Versailles. The price of this enormous failure amounted to about ten percent of the total building cost for Versailles.

This fascinating example of obsession is only the most expensive of Louis’s excesses at Versailles, as every aspect of its building went to extremes. Yet in his drive for glory, Louis forced France to rise to the occasion. As is well known, Versailles, as the seat of the court, made France the cultural capital of Europe. What Versailles did for French arts and culture,

it also did for French industry, engineering, and horticulture. Despite the Eure fiasco, French hydraulic engineering became the state of the art. The demand for thousands of flowers spurred the growth of a larger and more efficient French horticulture industry, whose representatives perfected procedures such as tree transplantation and introduced innovations in horticultural technology and botanical research. Under the inspired direction of Jean-Baptiste de La Quintinie, Louis’s *potager* included over three hundred varieties of pears alone, including the *Bon Chrétien*, a rare species ripe when others are out of season.

As the infrastructure of the château was emerging, so was a national system to ensure the timely delivery of men and materiel. To keep the enterprise going, all the while allowing the monarch and court to inhabit a palace in a constant state of construction, an efficient bureaucratic machine was fine-tuned by Colbert. Whatever glory Versailles presented, it was mirrored by the glory of an efficient state apparatus.

Yet, for all its merits, Thompson’s book is a frustrating read. The book is beautifully illustrated, but most images are not mentioned in the body of the

work, and the few that are do not appear near the page that refers to them. To compound the frustration, there is no cumulative list of illustrations, forcing the reader to thumb through the book to find an image under discussion. More unfortunate is the text. It is disjointed, repetitive, at times logically inconsistent, and contains far too many errors in continuity, dates, and spelling.

Within the space of three paragraphs, Thompson writes, “By the time *Le Nôtre* had been summoned to Versailles, things had got out of hand amongst the gardeners...” and “By the time that *Le Nôtre* and his colleagues arrived in 1662, order was well on the way to being restored.” He writes that the Grotto de Thétis was begun in “1665 [and] was years in the making,” but then says it was completed in 1666. (It was, in fact, begun around 1664/65 and completed circa 1674.) He notes the extensive “plant list at Trianon,” but elsewhere writes that the “plant palette of seventeenth-century France . . . was relatively limited.” He has Henriette d’Angleterre, first wife of Louis’s brother Philippe, duc d’Orléans, as the daughter of Charles I

of England on one page, and the daughter of Charles II of England on another. (Charles I was her father.) The date for the Bosquet de l'Étoile is "1668" in the text and "c. 1685–1686" in the illustration.

Equally troubling are some of Thompson's interpretations. As his opening line implies, Thompson focuses on certain aspects of Louis's character and relates them to the building history of the gardens and château. Here he has digested a vast amount of old and new material for which the reader can be thankful. Unfortunately he is prone to drawing conclusions and making assumptions that are both misleading and ill-conceived, and sometimes at odds with the information he himself has provided.

Thompson is keen on striking parallels between Versailles and its creator. "The King's passion for his gardens can be linked into both the patterns of his complicated love life and his military adventures, for it seems that he celebrated every conquest, whether of a new territory or a new courtesan, with an extension of his garden." Conversely Thompson tells us that when a mistress fell from favor, an element of Versailles associated with her would be removed or destroyed. For example, after Louis tired of his first official mistress,

Louise de la Vallière, he "needed a secluded retreat where he could make love to [Françoise] Athénaïs de Montespan," his second official mistress, and thus commanded the Trianon de Porcelaine to be built. Thompson then suggests that when Mme de Montespan lost Louis's affection, the king ordered the Trianon's destruction at the behest of his new official mistress, Françoise d'Aubigné, Mme de Maintenon. Strikingly, Thompson imputes so much importance to Louis's rapacious carnality that he suggests that the initial impetus for building Versailles was the monarch's need for a secluded spot to engage in his amorous adventures.

The facts don't necessarily refute this scenario, but they cannot be used to support it. The Trianon de Porcelaine was begun in 1669, two years after Louis and Mme de Montespan had established their liaison. The question begs: What were they doing during the intervening two years? Likewise, the Trianon de Porcelaine was destroyed in 1687 (a date Thompson does not provide), almost a decade after Mme de Montespan had fallen from favor. Indeed, Mme de Maintenon was on the ascendancy from the early 1680s

and married Louis in a secretmorganatic union shortly after the death of his wife, Marie-Thérèse, in 1683. Thompson's provocative thesis oversimplifies the *raison d'être* for Versailles and fails to take into account the complex relationship Louis had with his mistresses. Few were ever dropped cold; most lingered on at Versailles or were well provided for by Louis. Moreover, simultaneous lovers and the queen lived in respectable, if tense, proximity. Both Louis's love life and the building of Versailles are too complicated to be neatly correlated.

Thompson's attempts to relate the building of Versailles with Louis's conquests on the battlefield are similarly ill-considered. To be sure, it is a tried and true function of art to commemorate war victories in monuments and the like, and building palaces and waging wars often have a common objective: to glorify and solidify a ruler's power. Thompson quotes Colbert: "Your majesty knows that, apart from the glorious actions of war, nothing celebrates so advantageously the greatness and genius of princes than building, and all posterity measures them by the yardstick of those superb edifices which they have erected during their life." But Louis didn't need

Colbert's flattery to understand the importance of building, and – as Thompson himself makes abundantly clear – France was almost always at war during the construction of Versailles. The relationship between these "campaigns" was more complex than the author's account.

Thompson extrapolates his discussion of the construction–war relationship to garden making and war making. Both gardens and wars needed huge amounts of human resources, and both resulted in great losses. Thompson gives ample statistics and a good summary discussion of the casualties incurred during the construction of Versailles (mostly due to disease), but he again overstates the parallels ("lives were lost on the building site almost as easily as they were at war") and speculates beyond the supporting evidence ("presumably [Louis] regarded garden-making casualties in the same way as he thought of casualties at war").

In an overextension of the argument, Thompson ventures into even more hypothetical territory. He makes the interesting observation that André Le Nôtre, Louis's remarkable garden designer,

often visited the monarch on the field of battle. "What was Le Nôtre doing at the siege of Valenciennes?" Thompson asks. The honest answer is we don't know. Yes, as Thompson notes, it was the common practice for courtiers to show interest in warfare, and yes, the engineering techniques of warfare found their way into garden construction, especially on the scale of Versailles. Yet one cannot suggest, as Thompson does, that Le Nôtre attended the sieges of Valenciennes (1677) and Cambrai (1687) to further his understanding of martial engineering techniques for application in creating gardens. Again Thompson undercuts his assertion with the very facts he provides: Vaux-le-Vicomte was completed in the early 1660s and Versailles was well underway by the mid-1670s.

Easily the most engaging aspect of the book is Thompson's discussion of the warm, long, and by all contemporary accounts, sincere relationship between Louis and Le Nôtre. Despite the poisonous atmosphere of the Old Regime, where suffocating etiquette, withering gossip, and jealous resentments were the norm, Le Nôtre enjoyed an unsullied reputation. It seems that he was "loved by everyone," especially by the king, the only person who really counted.

Though born of modest means into a family of royal gardeners, Le Nôtre rose to heights well beyond his station, being ennobled by Louis in 1675. He retired a rich man, with an estate that included several properties and an art collection of over 250 works, some of which eventually landed in the Louvre. Le Nôtre was not only a supreme garden designer – genius, really (though Thompson avoids this superlative) – he was equally adept at working with and satisfying his patron's wishes. And clearly Louis was an exacting client. As told by Thompson, Louis's manic engagement – even from the battlefield – in the creation of Versailles was not just micro-management of the enterprise: it bordered on collaboration with his team of designers.

While Thompson gives an adequate discussion of Le Nôtre's designs (and redesigns) for Versailles, he is on shakier ground when he posits the French master's minor moments as foreshadowing a picturesque sensibility: "But though England's William Kent would one day be described as the first European to have 'leaped the fence and saw that all Nature was a garden,' there is a possibility that Le Nôtre got

there first.” To support this claim, Thompson repeats the well-known stories of the Bosquet des Sources in the Petit Parc (1679–82), and the later Jardin des Sources at the Trianon (1687–88). Both were wooded areas in which Le Nôtre departed from his usual regularized geometries by designing a rivulet in a somewhat naturalistic manner. Notwithstanding the adventurous nature of the bosquets, these two small patches of ground with squiggly streams, entirely encased in the overall structure of Versailles, cannot be interpreted as an incipient or tacit gesture toward a new gardening tradition. The bosquets in question – neither survived long – were bagatelles with no spatial component or structure, the two design elements that constitute the sine qua non of Le Nôtre’s style.

Then when Thompson continues the train of thought (“had [Le Nôtre] lived in a slightly different period, the style made famous by ‘Capability’ Brown . . . might have been within reach”), he goes off on a tangent that is simply irrelevant. Accepting that Le Nôtre and Brown had vastly different design palettes, he asserts that the difference between their methods “has

been overstated,” and that they were both adept at reading the “capabilities” of the landscapes they were reworking. For example, Le Nôtre put the Pièce d’Eau des Suisses on the site of a former duck pond; Brown damned declivities in landscapes to create lakes. Both kept to standard design motifs: Brown’s clumps, Le Nôtre’s axis and cross-axes. And both employed thousands of men and moved massive volumes of earth. None of what Thompson says is wrong, but what he discusses is common to *all* landscape design at the scale these men worked. Le Nôtre and Brown were simply participating in the historical continuum of designing and working land.

No matter, Thompson rightfully keeps credit where credit is due. Versailles is a work of André Le Nôtre, despite the supporting cast of thousands and a long history of garden precedents: “A steady tide of recent scholarship has tended to show how much Le Nôtre was a man of his times, and how great his debt was to earlier French gardeners such as the Mollet family, but there is really no way that his achievement can be taken away from him.” As Le Nôtre’s epitaph (supposedly written by himself) read, he “had no rival.”

For all its shortcomings, when you finish this book, you do appreciate an enor-

mous amount – that Versailles was conceived for one client by one man, aided in design by several more; that it was constructed and maintained by thousands; that hundreds of workers’ lives were sacrificed; that rivers were diverted, swamps drained, tons of earth moved, thousands of trees uprooted and transported, millions of flowers planted then discarded, new industries created, treasure squandered, loves lost and found, the list goes on. It is a heck of a story, especially for a garden. If Thompson falls short of giving it the justice it deserves, he has given it a noble try. – Joseph Disponzio

Gardens: An Essay on the Human Condition

By Robert Pogue Harrison
The University of Chicago Press, 2008

We humans continue to ravage our planet’s resources in the shortsighted belief that our rampant exploitation of a natural bounty that once seemed inexhaustible does not have fatal



consequences. While both old and new industrial societies rationalize the destruction we are wreaking in the name of social betterment and the economic benefits of consumerism, there is an uneasy sense that time is running out. Ironically, as our race against nature teeters on the brink of calamity, we are witnessing an explosion of garden writing: magazine articles that cater to landscape architects and their clients, how-to periodicals for gardeners, and coffee-table tomes with stunning color photographs of famous places. *Gardens*, by Robert Pogue Harrison, is something different and deeper: a meditation on the relationship between nature and human nature. Like Gaston Bachelard’s classic *The Poetics of Space*, its text is informed by poetry and philosophy.

Harrison, a professor of Italian literature at Stanford, is interested in origins. He encourages us to probe the etymology of words to repossess their ancient meanings. Take the word “horticulture,” which most of us use in its ordinary sense. *Hortus* is the Latin word for garden, a defined space

where nature is cultivated. Dig for the Indo-European origins of “horticulture” and you find *gher*, the word signifying an enclosure, such as a yard or orchard, an ordered precinct set apart from the randomness of wild nature. “Culture” and “cultivate,” of course, come from the same root: The noun means the collective intellectual and artistic achievements of a people, and the verb to improve and prepare land, to grow and tend a crop.

Harrison’s earlier book *Forests* (1993) serves in some ways as a companion to *Gardens*. The forest, from the Latin *foris*, meaning outside, is what is literally beyond the pale of civilization where humans dwell and where the arts as well as gardens are cultivated. It is the domain of the lost, a placeless expanse whose sky-excluding canopy obscures directionality. But the importance, indeed the necessity, of the forest cannot be denied. Epigraphically quoting Giambattista Vico – “This was the order of human institutions: first the forests, after that the huts, then the villages, next the cities, and finally the academies” – Harrison maintains that the forest is the primordial matrix of civilization. In clearing the forest we create

place from undifferentiated wilderness. More than a clearing in the wilderness, the forest floor when turned to humus – from the same root as “human” – is the medium in which agricultural societies as distant in time and space as Bronze-Age China and colonial America took root. Conversely, by planting gardens with trees, we claim place in partnership with the natural world.

In the realm of fairy tale and myth, the forest is a trackless darkness where the abominable lurks in the form of witches, wolves, giants, and evil spirits. Gardens, on the other hand, throughout human history, have been closely associated with paradise, which derives from the Persian *pairidaeza*, signifying a royal hunting park enclosed by walls. The classical garden is inhabited by such goddesses as Flora, Pomona, and Venus, and in the Judeo-Christian tradition a garden is the idyllic home created by God for the first man and woman. Harrison argues, however, that the Eden inhabited so briefly by Adam and Eve is a false paradise. Needing no cultivation, its spontaneous bounty dooms the first man and woman to useless ease, preventing their advance beyond an immature child-like state. Thus Eve’s legendary bite from the apple was not a sin but a means of human liberation from the

perfectly static garden created by a paternalistic God. By contrast, it is “the vocation of care,” personified by the Greek goddess Cura, that gives meaning to human existence.

The garden is moreover a powerful metaphor for human salvation, God’s grace being intrinsic to our moral being rather than a gift from on high. According to Harrison, “The gardens that have graced this mortal Eden of ours are the best evidence of humanity’s reason for being on Earth. Where history unleashes its destructive and annihilating forces, we must, if we are to preserve our sanity, to say nothing of our humanity . . . seek out healing or redemptive forces and allow them to grow in us. That is what it means to tend our garden.” In nourishing ourselves and one another, creating and procreating, sowing and reaping, we are able to realize our full mortal potential. Harrison then calls upon such philosophers as Plato, Epicurus, Vico, Rousseau, and Heidegger, and such poets and writers as Dante, Boccaccio, Andrew Marvel, Rainer Maria Rilke, Italo Calvino, Ludovico Ariosto, William Butler Yeats, Wallace Stevens, Pablo Neruda, and

Malcolm Lowry to make the case for the “fortunate fall,” the exchange of Eden’s easeful bliss for the redemptive grace of garden sanctuaries of our own making.

In *Gardens*, Harrison chooses the Czech writer and playwright Karel Capek’s (1890–1938) charmingly whimsical little book *The Gardener’s Year* to illustrate the profoundly necessary relationship between humus and humanity. Capek masks with humor the seriousness of his underlying message of the importance of the “vocation of care.” Obsessed with the frustrating vagaries of nature, he knows that the care of a garden teaches humility, for nature can be cruel in sometimes suspending its ordinarily reliable generosity. For him “a real gardener is not a man who cultivates the soil. He is a creature who digs himself into the earth.” Yet the recalcitrance of hardpan creates an awareness of the ameliorating role of humus, and the loving care of the earth implied by its application to sterile clay fosters the cultivation of the soul as well as the soil.

For each of the historical and legendary gardens he discusses, Harrison draws a moral lesson. Some gardens provide a necessary removal from the everyday world for the purpose of education in the ways of adult responsibility. Plato’s Academy, set in its grove outside the city

walls, was perhaps the first country campus. There, in temporary green seclusion, the youth of Athens were instructed in the philosophical perspective and values necessary to be good citizens, capable of responsible engagement in the affairs of the polis. For Harrison, Kingscote Garden, a quiet oasis on the Stanford campus, is a personal haven for sensory awareness and contemplation. But, like Plato’s Academy, it would lose its “essential tension” were it devoid of relationship to the outside world.

In contrast to both Kingscote and Plato’s Academy, the garden of the philosopher Epicurus was a different kind of haven. Established like Plato’s Academy on the outskirts of Athens, it was not a breeding ground for future statesmen but rather a place of retreat in dark times, when withdrawal from the world was necessary in order to avoid the ignominy of participating in “the fracas and power struggles of the polis.” The disciples of Epicurean philosophy, like the apprentices at Frank Lloyd Wright’s Taliesin, tended a vegetable garden where they learned the lessons of Cura and became educated in the ways of nature. Contrary to the notion that Epicureanism is

a hedonistic philosophy, the Garden of Epicurus was a place where anxiety and apprehension were meant to give way to the more long-term and spirit-sustaining pleasures of patience, hope, and gratitude.

Versailles teaches the opposite, for here the vice of pride – *superbia* – reigns supreme. Harrison finds Louis XIV’s desire to dominate nature repugnant. For that reason, the chapter devoted to Versailles is intentionally brief; however, the author’s aversion should not serve as an excuse for ignoring the many volumes of valuable scholarship on the garden of the Sun King. For example, he claims that André Le Nôtre, who designed the garden and its never-ending additions and constant revisions, “must have first sent in an army of bulldozers to clear away whatever grew here, reducing the grounds to a flat, empty plane on which to project the master design.” Bulldozers, for one thing, had not been invented in the seventeenth century, and LeNôtre’s plan, based on Cartesian mathematical principles, did not result in a single monotonous ground plane, as Harrison would have it; rather, its various levels and multiple axes allow for the garden’s optically ingenious play with perspective. Nevertheless, the historical record supports the thrust of Harrison’s

argument: an army of conscripted laborers created Versailles, and during its construction their death toll was enormous. As an example, the name of the garden’s largest water body after the Grand Canal, the Pièce d’Eau des Suisses, might well be said to commemorate the huge number of men of the Swiss Guard who died of malaria while excavating the marsh to create it. And it is true that Versailles, in comparison to its inspiration, Vaux-le-Vicomte, is a gloriously wearisome sprawl. It is a garden symbolizing not only Louis XIV’s hubris but also the restlessness of Western civilization, where enough is never enough.

Although every bit as influenced by the landscape designer’s art as Versailles, Japanese gardens such as Saiho-ji are examples of nature enhanced rather than nature ruled. In contrast to Versailles’s role as a social space for courtly ritual, Saiho-ji, alternately known as Koke-dera, meaning moss garden, is a metaphor for Amida’s paradise, a spiritual environment for individual meditation. The genius of Saiho-ji and of Zen gardens, such as the famous *karesansui* (dry) garden Ryoan-ji, lies in the setting of stones. The larger, more vertical ones are

carefully positioned in subtle symbolical arrangements, and the smaller, flatter ones partially buried in the earth, the unseen side considered as animate as the one that is visible. At Saiho-ji, for instance, Muso Soseki created a dry cascade of stones in the upper part of the garden. This oxymoronic feature, like a Zen koan, was intended as a means of frustrating rational thought in the interest of achieving a more intuitive mode of understanding. In a similar manner a Zen garden will contain a single *Oku* stone, which is completely buried, encouraging perception of the hidden.

Here the lesson Harrison derives is in “the lost art of seeing.” Today’s world is crowded with more visual stimuli than in any previous era, but the time that should be taken for the slow revelations of true seeing is given over to blind looking. We *look* at high-definition television and spend hours each day *watching* our computer screens. But we do not *see* what is all around us. We live in a noisy world and are bombarded with distracting aural stimuli. People who have become addicted to cell phones cannot actively employ their senses on a springtime walk in Central Park, much less in a Zen garden. Inevitably their attention is drawn not to the visible and invisible presence

of leaf and stone in all their revealed and hidden dimensions, but rather to invisible speech directed into the ear by satellite technology. Nor does travel, where the intention is clearly to *sightsee*, induce heightened perception when a garden is captured on the fly through the camera's viewfinder. Once it becomes merely a stop on a crowded itinerary, the experience of contemplative seeing in which the viewer is engaged in a slow revelatory dialogue with the garden is no longer possible.

The ideal of serenity versus the ideal of action is often seen as a duality between East and West. The contrast between Islam and Christianity is of a different sort than that exemplified by the comparison of the Zen garden and Versailles. Harrison devotes a chapter to describing the paradise found in the Qu'ran and the one in the Bible. The Eden of Genesis is the locus of drama, a setting in which the action of the story is all-important. While today we are prone to focus on militancy as a defining aspect of Islam, the Qu'ran portrays paradise in a very different light. For the Muslim, paradise is a place of serenity and repose amidst the blessings of opulent beauty and sensuous delight, where the righteous "shall be lodged in

peace together amidst gardens and fountains." This Islamic paradise has no drama, only contentment, and its rewards are imagined as physically real. It is thus a far cry from the eschatological paradise in Dante's *The Divine Comedy*, a series of nine celestial spheres in which members of the company of the blessed appear according to level of their virtue, the nature of their former sins, and the manner of their atonement. Here dramatic tension is created by the poet's confession of uncertainty that his words will be sufficiently rapturous to convey the increasing radiance and splendor of the souls he meets in his ascent toward the empyrean.

Harrison muses on the paradox of the coexistence of peace and jihad in the Muslim religion: "It is difficult for us in the West to understand how the religion in whose name so much violence is unleashed these days can have peace as its highest ideal. Even more challenging is to fathom how *the demand for peacefulness* in Islam might be behind the great upheavals. One of the major challenges in this regard is the fact that in the West we are driven by desires very different from the desire for peace. That difficulty is compounded by our naïve assumption that the desires that drive us are universally shared, whereas they are in fact anything but universal

in nature. One day we will hopefully overcome this limitation and realize that it is not so much our modern Western values (freedom, democracy, gender equality, etc.) but rather the unconstrained frenzy of the West – our relentless demand for action, change, innovation, intervention, and a systematic transgression of limits – that offends the very core of Islam in the eyes of the extremists. Where paradise is imagined as a garden of perfect tranquility, our incurable Western agitation takes on a diabolical quality."

Alas, it is with images of an afterlife in the Qur'anic paradise that our contemporary jihad warriors seek their martyrdom, a place where "reclining face to face upon soft couches, they shall be served with a goblet filled at a gushing fountain, white, and delicious to those who drink it . . . [and] sit with bashful, dark-eyed virgins, as chaste as the sheltered eggs of ostriches" (37: 46-49). In opposition to this seemingly irrational fanaticism, the West falsely sees itself as a secular bastion of rational purpose rooted in democratic justice. But as Harrison observes, "There is little doubt that in the modern era stillness, repose, beauty, and harmony with the cos-

mic order no longer define, even in a hypothetical way, the ultimate end point of [Western] human desire. Desire now desires more of itself, more of its own restlessness. . . . Thus we find ourselves in the paradoxical situation of seeking to recreate Eden by ravaging the garden itself – the garden of the biosphere on the one hand and the garden of human culture on the other."

These are dire words, for we live in dire times. In the final analysis we are left with the image of the garden as humanity's last, best hope for survival. The tragedy of the present lies in our careless degradation of nature. Thoreau said, "In wildness is preservation of the world," words that became the rallying cry of the environmental movement. But Harrison points out that Thoreau's year in the Walden woods was never outside the cultural context of Concord and that his cultivation of the garden he planted there represented "the vocation of care." We need the garden and all it represents now more than ever. We must learn to care not just in an emotional way but also literally, as stewards of the planet. Cura shall lead the way. Her message is clear: you must care enough to cultivate your earthly mortal garden – the only true paradise there is.

– Elizabeth Barlow Rogers

Calendar

International Conference on Japanese Gardens Outside Japan **March 26–29, 2009** **California State University, Long Beach**

It is currently reckoned that there are Japanese gardens in at least 53 countries. In North America alone there are approximately 250. Despite the ubiquity, scale, and complex social function of these gardens, there is no forum for the direct exchange of ideas about them. To remedy this situation, California State University, Long Beach, plans to host an international conference devoted to Japanese gardens outside Japan on its campus near Los Angeles. The first and last days will feature group tours to major public and private Japanese gardens in the Los Angeles area. The two middle days of the conference will feature panels by garden administrators, designers, educators, historians, and maintenance

experts on topics including design, restoration, collection management, specialty maintenance, fundraising, events, education, and the philosophy of Japanese gardens outside Japan. For more information, contact Jeanette Schelin, Director of the Earl Burns Miller Japanese Garden, at jschelin@csulb.edu.

Foreign Trends on American Soil **May 2010** **History of Landscape Architecture Symposium** **University of Maryland at College Park**

This symposium will be a forum for the discussion of the formation of a multifaceted American tradition of garden and landscape design that is based on the interpretation and adaptation of trends imported into the United States from the eighteenth century up to the present. Topics of interest may include the reception and legacy of foreign horticultural and design literature as well as the impact of the work of overseas designers and critics on contemporary practice.

Landscape and garden historians are invited to submit paper abstracts of no more than 600 words by December 1, 2008. Abstracts are to be headed with the applicant's name, title of the paper, professional affiliation, and contact information. Please send paper proposals to:

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Authors of accepted proposals will be required to submit the complete text of their papers to the symposium chair by August 15, 2009. Speakers will be asked to complete any revisions and submit copies of their papers by March 2010.

Tours

In the Footsteps of Frank Lloyd Wright: The Gardens of Japan

April 16–30, 2009

Frank Lloyd Wright traveled to Japan in the spring of 1905. Now, over a hundred years later, the Foundation for Landscape Studies is offering a study tour of gardens, waterfalls, shrines, and temples that he visited and photographed. Highlights include visits to the Rikugien garden in Tokyo, the Buddhist shrines at Nikko, and the Kiyomizu-dera (Pure Water Temple) in Kyoto. Also included are the Fujiya Hotel

where Wright stayed in Hakone and lunch at the Kanaya Hotel where he stayed in Nikko. The tour will stray from Wright's path in order to visit gardens and buildings that were not part of his itinerary, including some stunning new museums. Participants will be limited to twenty. For a complete itinerary and registration information, please contact Elizabeth Barlow Rogers: rogerseb@aol.com.



Saiho-ji Moss Garden, Kyoto.

Contributors

Anthony Alofsin, Ph.D., AIA, is the Roland Roessner Centennial Professor of Architecture and a professor of art and art history at the University of Texas at Austin. An architect, art historian, lecturer, and author of numerous books and essays, he is internationally recognized as a principal authority on the architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright. His most recent publication is *When Buildings Speak: Architecture as Language in the Habsburg Empire and Its Aftermath, 1867-1933* (University of Chicago Press, 2006).

Kendall Brown, Ph.D., is a professor of art history at California State University, Long Beach. Trained in Japanese art history, he has published several books and numerous exhibition catalogues on modern Japanese painting and woodblock prints. As a garden historian, he specializes in Japanese gardens outside Japan. The author of *Japanese-style Gardens of the Pacific West Coast* (Rizzoli International, 1988), he is currently working on a cultural history of Japanese gardens in North America.

Paula Deitz is editor of *The Hudson Review*, a magazine of literature and the arts published in New York City. As a cultural critic, she writes about art, architecture, and landscape design for newspapers and magazines here and abroad. *Of Gardens*, a collection of her essays, will be published in the near future by the University of Pennsylvania Press.

Joseph Disponzio, Ph.D., R.L.A., is a preservation landscape architect with the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation. He has taught at the Harvard Graduate School of Design, Bryn Mawr College, and the University of Georgia. A specialist in French picturesque garden theory, he has published widely in the field of landscape history. His most recent publication is *Territories: Contemporary European Landscape Design* (Spacemaker Press, 2007).

Marc Peter Keane is a landscape architect and writer based in Ithaca, New York. He lived in Kyoto, Japan, for eighteen years, designing gardens for private individuals, companies, and temples. His books include *Japanese Garden Design*, an introduction to the culture and aesthetics of Japanese gardens; *Sakuteiki*, a translation of Japan's oldest gardening treatise; and *The Art of Setting Stones*, eight essays on the meaning of gardens. More about Keane's work can be found at www.mpkeane.com.

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