

viewpoints

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Garden History
and Landscape Studies
at the Bard Graduate Center

Letter from the Editors

Viewpoints, the publication of the Bard Graduate Center's program of Garden History and Landscape Studies, addresses readers both within and beyond academia. These include our supporters and colleagues in other academic institutions and professions – art and architectural historians, landscape architects and architects, environmentalists, gardeners, and people who travel to learn about the nature of places.

We think it is important to feature many facets of landscape study and to draw perspectives from sources beyond our own walls. In this issue we have invited landscape historian Marc Treib to review *The Changing Garden: Four Centuries of European and American Art*, a recent

book edited by Betsy G. Fryberger, who organized the exhibition it accompanied. Ethan Carr, assistant professor in landscape architecture and regional planning at the University of Massachusetts and adjunct professor at the Bard Graduate Center, reviews *Myth and History in the Creation of Yellowstone National Park* by Paul Schullery and Lee Whittlesey. The conservationist and writer William deBuys offers his perspective on how the natural landscape of northern New Mexico is in a state of profound transformation.

In this issue, we have chosen to bring to the fore the part of garden history and landscape studies that deals with those very essences of Earth: gnomes, stones, and desert soil. While the consideration of gnomes may seem whimsical to some readers, these imaginary folkloric
continued on page 2

Gnomenculture

The gnome is perhaps the most despised garden ornament in landscape history. With his pickax, lantern, wheelbarrow, and little deer for companions, he has long been an object of scorn, an emblem of bad taste, and an affront to the designers of beautiful flower borders. Banished from polite society, he mostly dwells in European allotment gardens and American blue-collar yards, where he leads a most happy life. At best, he is admired with an ironic eye as a piece of kitsch. To make matters worse, the classic 1937 Disney film, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, caused this noble character to be transformed into the likes of Bashful, Sneezy, Sleepy, Happy, Grumpy, Dopey, and Doc. The publication of *Gnome Life: A Monthly Celebration of Secrets, Tales, and Whimsy*, by Wil Huygen and the illustrator Rien Poortvliet (Abrams, 1999), made the garden gnome suffer so much from

platitudes about his true nature, that, as the victim of this erroneous information, he has hidden himself out of shame.

Although produced nowadays in bright plastic and not terra-cotta (as was the case a century and more ago), the traditional garden gnome has great charm. Being a good-humored fellow, full of laughter, kind to adults, a friend to children, and a companion of nature, he embodies the instructive behavior of a character in a fairy tale. It is therefore strange that his reputation remains so poor. The gnome's genealogy is impressive: He descends from the pygmy and from human beings with growing disorders. He is a relative of the court dwarfs from the

seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, who were valued highly, yet also caricatured, because of their diminutive stature and deformities. Sculpted series of courtiers as dwarfs decorate several German and Austrian gardens from this period. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, when the brothers Grimm started to collect folk and fairy tales (*Grimm's Fairy Tales*, 1819), the gnome became thoroughly embedded within the collective Western imagination. Who is not familiar with the charming dwarfs and gnomes found in such children books as Elsa Beskow's *Peter in*
continued on page 4



Suzanne Hahn, *Garden Gnome*, 1995.

beings, which find their way into the garden as fey ornament, make us conscious of the power that the now much-exploited deep forest and mineral-enriched underground have had on the human imagination. Then there are those stony landscapes that proclaim Earth's bones. Machu-Picchu, where superb Inca masonry is set in dialogue with mountain forms, and Petra, the ancient Nabataean desert city of natural cliffs carved into architectural forms, remind us that stones are, as much as plants, an important part of landscape design. Marfa, Texas, the semi-desert town where artist Donald Judd created a museum complex, and nearby Big Bend National Park similarly extend the meaning of the term landscape beyond our traditional notion of moist-climate greenery.

We value your ideas and suggestions for future issues as we continue to build this forum for literary conversation about the history and meaning of place at the Bard Graduate Center and beyond.

Elizabeth Barlow Rogers
Editor

Erik de Jong
Associate Editor

New Course Offerings

The Bard Graduate Center is pleased to announce the addition of two new course offerings this spring in Garden History and Landscape Studies. **Vanessa Bezemer Sellers**, who earned her M.A. and Ph.D. in art history at Princeton, is teaching “**The Art and Architecture of the Baroque Garden.**” **Tim Davis**, who holds a Ph.D. in American civilization from the University of Texas and currently serves as lead historian of the National Park Service’s Park Historic Structures and Cultural Landscapes Program, is teaching “**Interpreting Ordinary Landscapes.**”

Sellers is the author of *Courtly Gardens in Holland, 1600–1650: The House of Orange and the Hortus Batavus*. In her class, she charts the history of European gardens from the late 1500s through the early 1700s. Her students analyze landscape theory and design through contemporary engravings, books, and treatises, and trace the crosscurrents of cultural influence as these images and texts were disseminated throughout Europe. The course also addresses the influence of science and technology on culture during this rich period of discovery, especially the technical advances enabling the creation of fountains and other waterworks. In addition, it focuses on the era’s cultivation of many new plant species and the phenomenon of unbridled market enthusiasm known as *tulipomania*. Students gain insight into the relationship between gardens and the decorative arts as they examine the palaces and landscapes of Louis XIV, William and Mary, Peter the Great, and other princes of the period.



Little Sparta, Stonypath, Dunsyre,
near Lanark, Scotland. Garden
design by Ian Hamilton Finlay.
Begun 1966.

Davis has published on various aspects of American landscape history and is the principal editor of the forthcoming volume *America’s National Park Roads and Parkways: Drawings from the Historic American Engineering Record*. His course, which pays particular attention to intellectual developments of the past half century, provides a sweeping overview of the ways in which the study of “everyday,” or “vernacular” landscapes has emerged as a vital scholarly, artistic, and literary pursuit. By examining the work of important scholars, artists, writers, and popular social commentators, students learn to read even the most “ordinary” landscapes as significant cultural spaces. Drawing on recent work in art history, sociology, cultural geography, documentary photography, and environment psychology, the course explores the ways in which landscapes are invested with meaning and considers their role in the construction and contestation of cultural norms and values. The study of past and present landscapes thus becomes an inquiry into the interactions among the human mind, the physical environment, and a host of complex and often competing social factors – the transformation of abstract physical space into a richly textured mosaic of individualized and culturally resplendent places.



Calendar

March 18–June 20, 2004 **The Devonshire Inheritance: Five Centuries of Collecting at Chatsworth**

Comprising more than 200 works of art, the exhibition highlights the family’s private collection, not normally on view to the public and rarely exhibited. It presents a comprehensive portrait of five centuries of artistic connoisseurship and intellectual pursuits and is organized chronologically by generation. The objects in each section have been carefully selected to illustrate the interests and historical roles played by successive family members.

**Monday
March 22, 2004
6:00 p.m.**

**Lecture by Kate Colquhoun,
author of *A Thing in Disguise: The Visionary Life
of Joseph Paxton***

The Bard Graduate Center
Lecture Hall
(38 West 86th Street)

Organized in association with the Horticultural Society of New York. General admission: \$20; seniors and members of the Horticultural Society: \$15
6:00 p.m. to 7:15 p.m.:
lecture
7:15 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.:
book signing reception

Joseph Paxton: Eminent Victorian Gardener

In 1826, the sixth duke of Devonshire offered Joseph Paxton (1801–1865) the position of head gardener at Chatsworth, his Derbyshire estate. The subsequent flowering of Paxton's genius, combined with the duke's largess, soon made Chatsworth a seat of horticultural renown. Paxton set about repairing and improving the garden's original waterworks, perfecting his hydrological skills until he became the foremost English fountain engineer of the day. Chatsworth's Emperor Fountain at Chatsworth was in its time the world's tallest. Paxton also earned renown as the designer of Crystal Palace for London's Great Exhibition in 1851. He was, in addition, the creator of several of England's first purpose-built public parks.

April 14-17, 2004 The Society of Architectural Historians' 57th Annual Meeting

(Providence, Rhode Island.)

The Landscape Chapter Organization meets Friday, April 16, from noon to 2:00 p.m. The discussion, led by Marc Treib, University of California, Berkeley, will consider reinstituting a Landscape Chapter of SAH reflecting increased interest among the membership. This will be an informal gathering to test the interest in a Landscape Chapter and to

consider the purpose, scope, and activities for the group. For more information or to register for the meeting, go to www.sah.org or call 312-573-1365.

**Tuesday
May 4, 2004
6:00 p.m.**

Solitary Wanderings: Music, Phantasy, and the Landscape Garden in the late 18th Century

Andrew Appel, clavichordist and director of the Four Nations Ensemble and Erik deJong, associate director and professor of Garden History and Landscape Studies, Bard Graduate Center (Event will be held at the home of the program director.)

This recital and discussion of garden engravings in rare books, followed by buffet supper, is limited to members of the Bard Garden Circle and invited guests.

May 6-8, 2004 Dumbarton Oaks Garden and Landscape Symposium 2004

Botanical Progress, Horticultural Innovations and Cultural Changes

(Held in conjunction with the Smithsonian Institution, Department of Botany, and the United States Botanical Garden)

This joint symposium will explore how major developments in botany and horticulture impacted gardens, gardening, landscaping and

science; how these disciplines depended upon ongoing social and cultural changes; and how botany and horticulture contributed to larger changes in social and cultural practices. For program and registration materials, go to www.doaks.org.

**January, February,
March 2005
(Two Tuesday afternoons
each month)**

Great Books, Great Gardens Early Twentieth Century English Gardens and Their Creators

(A mini-course taught by Eleanor Dwight, Ph.D.)

In the early twentieth century English gardeners created exciting landscapes in a new style that combined their knowledge of the past with contemporary planting philosophy and horticultural opportunity. The designers of Hidcote and Sissinghurst changed the direction of garden history by synthesizing the formal and informal with their structured layouts and imaginative planting.

The course will begin with a review of the history of English garden styles and will emphasize selected fiction, memoirs, letters, and biographies of innovative landscape creators, members of the Bloomsbury group and other writers.

Participation is limited to members of the BGC Garden Circle and other supporters. To register, please call 212-505-3064 or e-mail rogers@bgc.bard.edu.

**September 23–December 3,
2004**

Ian Hamilton Finlay: Works on Paper

(UBS Paine-Webber Gallery, 1285 Avenue of the Americas, between 51st and 52nd Streets. Organized under the sponsorship of the Bard Graduate Center.)

Graphics and Gardening at Little Sparta

The relevance of *Ian Hamilton Finlay: Works on Paper* to the BGC is twofold. Given its focus on the decorative arts and design, the institution's purview includes graphic art. In addition, because Finlay has created an important and original garden, his work relates to the BGC's recently established Garden History and Landscape Studies program.

First-year students taking the Garden History and Landscape History survey course examine the works of contemporary landscape architects, land artists, and gardeners at the end of their second semester. Prominent among these is the postmodern garden, Little Sparta that Finlay built in the rolling downs of southern Scotland

where sheep graze and ponds are ringed with wild vegetation. Like several eighteenth-century English gardens, Little Sparta (so named by Finlay following a protracted battle with local county authorities over a tax assessment for his Garden Temple) is an associational landscape. Certain features are meant to provoke the visitor's consideration of pastoral and political themes. There are neoclassical columns, walls constructed of weathered local stones, and carefully crafted wooden bridges and benches. Many of these have incised words that allude to Finlay's obsession with themes of the pastoral, World War II, the sea, the French Revolution, and the poem. The exhibition highlights the ways in which Finlay, a concrete poet and owner of the Wild Hawthorn Press, combines graphic design and word play in his prints and limited-edition publications. The relationship between his garden and graphic art is revealed in the show's prints and photographs.

For more information on the exhibit, call 212-713-2885. Those wishing to visit Little Sparta will find information at www.gardenvisit.com/g/lit6.htm

Contributors

Ethan Carr is a visiting professor at the Bard Graduate Center, where he teaches "Central Park: The Landscape, its Management, and its Restoration." He is also an assistant professor of landscape architecture and regional planning at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst and the author of *Wilderness by Design: Landscape Architecture and the National Park Service* (1998).

William deBuys, Ph.D., teaches documentary studies at the College of Santa Fe and chairs the Valles Caldera Trust, which administers the 89,000-acre Valles Caldera National Preserve. DeBuys is the author of four books, including *River of Traps* (1990), a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize, and *Salt Dreams: Land and Water in Low-Down California* (1999), which won a Western States Book Award.

Marc Treib is professor of architecture at the University of California, Berkeley. His most recent book is *Noguchi in Paris: The Unesco Garden* (William Stout, San Francisco and Unesco, Paris, 2003).

Blueberry Land or Astrid Lindgren's *The Tomten*? The garden gnome is their dear relative.

His origins can be traced to myths and sagas from densely wooded and mountainous areas of Eastern, middle, Western, and northern Europe. It was only in the sunny lands of southern Europe that the gnome did not take up residence in the popular imagination. Like Snow White's dwarfs, the gnomes of myth and saga are traditionally itinerant mountain people, trekking from place to place to do seasonal work in mines. These miners' sudden comings and goings and frequent disappearances into the bowels of the earth fostered the impression, which was adopted by later storytellers, that gnomes were diminutive folk.

From such tales, the garden gnome derives his principal attribute, the pickax. He thus became famous for being a creature who lives close to the earth, a participant in the earth's magical powers. Believed to be an advocate of nature, he is seen as a caretaker of all living things and earns his rightful place in the garden by assisting flowers, plants, and trees

to grow. It is no exaggeration to say that the garden gnome, influenced by nineteenth-century romantic nationalism, has come to symbolize nature. Understandably, therefore, the garden gnome does not consort with Flora, Ceres, and Pomona. These are the classical goddesses of agriculture and horticulture that one finds represented in aristocratic gardens of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Instead, the garden gnome, being a true "genius of the place," embodies something more elemental: the very forces of nature. As such, he represents democracy, freedom, brotherhood, and equality, symbolized by his red Phrygian cap, derived from the headgear of French Revolutionaries at the end of the eighteenth century.

Fortunately, contemporary artists such as Suzanne Hahn have revived the motif of the garden gnome. Hers is a small figure, his head still topped with a red hat. But he wears a modern suit and stands dapper with hand in pocket. He gazes optimistically upward, his left hand raised, and appears as if about to speak. We get the impression that he is wondering...about us, perhaps? "Once upon a time" has become in the hand of this artist "here again." Recently, some of us humans have reported hearing in woods and gardens tiny voices whispering: "Watch out! We're coming!" Or was that simply the sound of rustling leaves? – EDJ

Save the Date!

*Fall Picnic with Gnomes
in Central Park*

Wednesday, September 29

Words from the West

A Perfect Storm of Landscape Transformation

Not long ago, I watched dawn illuminate the Rio Grande Valley from the hills above Santa Fe. The Jemez Mountains bound the valley on the west, and, as the morning advanced, low-angle sunlight penetrated the forests of the eastern slopes of the Jemez in such a way that from forty miles away, I could identify expanses of forest that had burned in the crown fires of the past decade. Where only dead trees stood, the snow on the ground shone through brightly. I was surprised by the vastness of the area of gleaming snow.

South to north, I could see the territory of the Dome Fire of 1996, the Cerro Grande Fire of 2000 (which consumed more than two hundred residences in Los Alamos – by far the largest community in the Jemez), and the Oso Complex fire of 1998. Less distinct, both because of the greater number of intervening years and because it burned on relatively flatter terrain, was the La Mesa fire of 1977, tucked between the territories of the Dome and Cerro Grande fires. These four fires total more than 100,000 acres, and they nearly blanket the ponderosa-pine zone and most of the mixed-conifer zone of the east face of the entire Jemez mountain range. There are gaps, of course, but the thorough destruction of the primary timber resource of such an enormous area is the unfortunate result of 95 years of land management, from the establishment of the Jemez Forest Reserve in 1905 until 2000, when the last embers of the Cerro Grande fire grew cold. Along the way (and much to the consternation of the Forest Service), a significant portion of Santa Fe National Forest (into which the Jemez Forest Reserve had been absorbed) was set aside as Bandelier National Monument and placed under the management of the National Park Service.

If the purpose of the Forest Service and the Park Service had been to destroy the timber resource of the east face of the Jemez Mountains, we would certainly congratulate them. They could

hardly have done a better job. But the purpose of the agencies was the reverse, and especially in the case of the Forest Service, it was to enhance, protect, and use those selfsame timber resources in a sustainable manner. What went wrong?

The roots of the problem are both intellectual and attitudinal: The former because the foresters' conceptual model for how forests functioned was deeply flawed, and the latter because their exaggerated belief in their capacity to control nature blinded them to the import of contrary information. Their failure was an inability to learn and adapt.

Primary among the conceptual errors was their misunderstanding of the role of fire in structuring the mid-altitude ecosystems of the West and Southwest. Ponderosa-pine forests, in particular, are superbly adapted to recurrent, low-intensity ground fires that retard fuel buildup and seedling establishment, thereby maintaining the open and grassy near-savanna characteristics that greeted the region's first Euro-American settlers.

But the errors run much deeper than simply misapprehending the role of fire. The people who built the institutions of so-called land management in the United States failed to appreciate the complexity of the natural systems in their charge, and they assumed that their understanding of how those systems operated and how the systems might be altered to satisfy human appetites was both accurate and sufficient. They also failed to recognize that low-intensity fire was the keystone process that structured southwestern pine forests. They believed that by eliminating forest fires, they would automatically grow more and better timber. But they did not adequately test these hypotheses until enormous, irrevocable damage occurred.

The cause of firefighting helped justify the establishment of the National Forest System and the Forest Service. The agency was created during a period when devastating fires roared through the northern Rockies and when the memory of even worse conflagrations in the cutover pinelands of the upper Midwest was still fresh. Emerging from such trauma, the Forest Service developed a strong sense of its firefighting mission as an essential element of its esprit de corps, even to the point of denying, in the face of much evidence to the contrary, the practical utility and ecological importance of low-intensity fires. Ultimately, the agency accepted the necessity of controlled burning only when forced to do so as a condition of establishing

national forests in the famously fire-dependent pinelands of the Southeast. Even then, the Forest Service was lamentably slow to abandon its prejudice against fire and to adopt fire as a management tool.

The legacy of the Forest Service's anti-fire policy contributes to a situation that few previous generations have been able to observe: We are now well positioned to witness a perfect storm of landscape change. In addition to fire, it involves massive forest-tree diebacks and, in some areas, grasses. The principal dieback agents are the same as those that increase the landscape's vulnerability to devastating fires: Unnaturally high tree densities also mean unnaturally high competition for limited water and, as a consequence, reduced vigor and increased vulnerability to insects and disease. In addition, two important climatic changes are at work. The first is the Southwest's return to conditions of relative aridity. Since the winter of 1995-96, the lack of region-wide precipitation has approached levels not seen since the drought of the 1950s, which remains one of the worst on record.

Global climate change may also be a factor in the gathering storm. The long-term record of the Southwestern climate is variable enough to account for the current temperature extremes and dryness, but systemic climate change may also be at work, expanding the range of variability and amplifying the difficulties posed by an already challenging and challenged environment.

Recent aerial inventories indicate that 3.5 million acres of piñon- and ponderosa-pine habitat are dominated by dead and dying trees in New Mexico, Colorado, Arizona, and Utah. This amounts to more than 8% of all such habitat – and there is no reason to believe that the dieback is over. An additional 8% to 10% could easily fall victim to drought and insects if dry conditions persist. Local diebacks that are much less dramatic have also been noted among Douglas fir in the mixed-conifer zone, one-seed junipers in the woodland zone, and the grasses of semi-arid rangelands. It seems that no ecosystem will escape the vise of drought. Observers who detach themselves from the emotional effect of seeing so much death in the landscape can

feel privileged to witness changes more pervasive and profound than those that any other recent generation has seen. But the necessary detachment does not come easily.

The best result of all this change, if only it could be realized, might be a new humility among land managers, opening them (and us) to relying less on received wisdom and to feeling a renewed dedication to meaningful learning. We might start by abandoning the arrogant term land management, which gains particular irony within the context of the eastern slopes of the Jemez Mountains. Both society and the environment would benefit if we were to admit that we don't really manage land. The most we usually do is nudge it in the direction we want it to go. But to do that, we must also be land learners.

What are the characteristics of a land learner? Such a person (or agency) must be committed to empirical, incremental learning and also be committed to monitoring ecosystems in ways that strive to measure change, not just in areas where change is expected, but also in areas where it is not – in ways that are alert to surprise. This commitment must extend beyond the surface of field science to include the art that inheres in science and that embraces the inescapable uncertainty of complex natural systems. The science of land learning is always experimental yet cumulative, disciplined yet flexible, and thorough yet open to additional questions. It must incorporate all these qualities and many more: humility, restraint, and an eagerness for new ways of thinking.

A land learner must also be adaptive. Every way of looking at the world contains its own intrinsic truth, and the traditional understandings of place-based native cultures from around the globe have much to teach Western scientists about the responsiveness and complexity of the inhabited world. Imagine how much better off the lands of the American West would be if the founders of the Forest Service had been willing to consider or at least seriously test the wisdom of the Native Americans who understood the role of fire in maintaining balanced ecosystems. Every land steward should wonder what so-called folk or native practices we as a society currently ignore to the detriment of the land and the people on which it depends. The forest of charred, dead snags that blankets the eastern slopes of New Mexico's Jemez Mountains provides eloquent testimony that we land stewards of the twenty-first century have a long and challenging journey before us. – William deBuys

Bare-Bones Beauty:

Donald Judd and the Wide-Open West Texas Landscape

Nowadays, walk down the main street of Marfa, Texas, and you are likely to hear tourists speaking French or German. Fast becoming a cultural anomaly in a land where sun-bronzed locals with work-hardened hands still gather to drink black coffee rather than cappuccino, Marfa is a small cattle-and-military town on which art-world fame and money have recently descended. Its several restored buildings, including the Marfa Bookstore (which contains a large inventory on subjects such as the architecture of Frank Gehry), the spruced-up old Paisano Hotel, and a newly opened restaurant offering risotto instead of refried beans, are the result of the singular ambition of minimalist sculptor Donald Judd (1928–1994).

It is doubtful that Judd would have wanted it this way. Like other artists of his generation who boycotted the gallery system to create new art-exhibition alternatives to conventional museum spaces, Judd chose as the site of his museum complex the former Fort D.A. Russell – originally a cavalry outpost, then a U.S. Army station for border patrol, then the headquarters of the 77th Field Artillery battalion, and a camp for German prisoners during World War II. Sponsored by the Dia Foundation beginning in 1979, it has been administered since 1986 by the not-for-profit Chinati Foundation (so named for the nearby mountain range) that Judd established before his death.

But why Marfa? Located in the cacti-dotted West Texas plains not far from Presidio (the border town that doesn't report its



A garden in Marfa, Texas.

daily temperatures to minimize its notoriety as the hottest spot in the nation), Marfa is about as far removed from the cultural climate of the New York art world as possible. Judd first discovered Marfa when he served in the army. Like Robert Smithson, Michael Heizer, and James Turrell, land artists of his generation who purchased ranches in Utah, Nevada, and Arizona as sites for their work, he chose Marfa precisely for its remoteness and the opportunity to buy a large tract of land (340 acres) at a low price. There, in a place where the surrounding landscape reinforces the spare purity of minimalist art, Judd thought he could realize his vision of creating a personal museum in which a permanent display of his work and that of other artists he admired could be installed.

Two enormous remodeled artillery sheds, a stripped-down former gymnasium, and several U-shaped barracks set in the immense big-sky landscape that Texans call the Big Bend (Marfa is located just an hour north of where the Rio Grande swings around to form the large lobe that gives the state its distinct shape) provided an ideal spot. The quietly beautiful West Texas light pours through the long walls of continuous squared and quartered windows, variously modulating the soft sheen of Judd's 100 equally dimensioned, but diversely designed,



Donald Judd, *Untitled Work in mill aluminum*, 1982–6. The Chinati Foundation, Marfa, Texas.

machine-milled aluminum boxes. The two spacious interiors in which these works are installed offer views of a landscape that stretches to the horizon. This combination of vast interior space and endlessly extensive exterior space enhances the serene nobility of Judd's pieces, providing an aesthetic experience that could not have been found in another location.

Those who travel as art pilgrims to the shrine of minimalism that Marfa now represents sometimes don't realize their opportunity to experience this extraordinary landscape for its own sake. The town of Fort Davis, a few miles north of Marfa, is the home of the MacDonald Observatory, which is administered by the astronomy department of the University of Texas. The observatory, which sits atop the Davis Mountains, is equipped with four telescopes. Even without the aid powerful lenses, visitors can see the revolving constellations in the clear night sky. The observatory boasts a lunar ranging station and the world's third largest optical telescope, which is used for spectroscopic computer imaging.

The Davis Mountains are especially scenic, as are the Guadalupe Mountains to the northwest. Both ranges comprise peaks that reach above 8,000 feet, and their heavily wooded ridges and rocky canyons offer many fine hiking trails where diverse ecological niches support a variety of species of vegetation and wildlife.

The grandest West Texas landscape of all lies within the 801,000-acre Big Bend National Park just southeast of Marfa. Like the other mountains that rise in clumps from the flat northern Chihuahuan Desert, the Chisos Mountains within Big Bend are igneous in origin. The differential erosion between their solidified magma and the softer strata of limestone formed by marine deposits sometime after the period of volcanic eruption that created them, left the present-day landscape of sheer-sided, monumental, burnt-red blocks and peaks.

Naturalists come to see some of the 450 species of birds (the greatest number found in any national park) as well as 1,200 species of plants. Spiny wands of ocotillo (*Fouquieria splendens*), four kinds of yucca, the sculptural blue-gray-leaved Havard agave (*Agave havardiana*), and more than 60 species of cacti, including the beautiful purple prickly pear (*Opuntia violaceaa-mong*) grow along pine-and-juniper-clad mountainsides or in the chalky cream-colored surrounding desert. River trips down the Rio Grande take rafters through a canyon whose towering, sheer-faced bluffs can be read as layers of geologic time. For students of landscape design history, a hike on Lost Mine Trail in Big Bend offers an opportunity to examine the fine rockwork walls that the Civilian Conservation Crew built from 1940 to 1942.

The commingling of nature and art as landscape constitutes the fundamental perspective of all the BGC's courses in Garden History and Landscape Studies. Marfa, Big Bend, and the scenery of West Texas combine a bare-bones landscape beauty with the opportunity to see how Donald Judd capitalized on that beauty as the context for his refined, minimalist art. — EBR

Books and Exhibitions

Lost and Found:

The Desert City of Petra

Petra Rediscovered: Lost City of the Nabataeans.

Edited by Glenn Markoe.

(Abrams, in association with the Cincinnati Art Museum, 2003).

Petra.

By Maria Giulia Amadasi Guzzo and Eugenia Equini Schneider.

(University of Chicago Press, 2002).

Petra and the Lost Kingdom of the Nabataeans.

By Jane Taylor.

(Harvard University Press, 2002).

Petra: Lost City of the Ancient World.

By Christian Augé and Jean-Marie Dentzer.

(Abrams, 2000).

For more than a thousand years, only Bedouin tribesmen knew of the existence of an abandoned ancient city concealed within the narrow gorge of the Wadi Musa on the western edge of the Jordanian

plateau. Lying east of the Negev and midway along the

north-south axis between the Dead Sea and the Gulf of Aqaba, this hidden city, Petra, meaning “the rock,” was fortified by nature with towering cliffs of reddish limestone. In 1812, Johann Ludwig Burckhardt, an intrepid Swiss scholar and explorer disguised as an Arab, was the first Westerner to behold its monumental tomb architecture, a sophisticated variant of Hellenism, which was – astonishingly – carved out of the living rock.

Who were the Nabataeans, the desert people who created this remarkable place during the centuries bracketing the beginning of the Common Era? Archaeological discoveries and subsequent scholarship have supplemented the romantic accounts of the few

adventurous nineteenth-century grand tourists and early Holy Land sightseers who followed Burckhardt. The rediscovered art and architecture of



the Nabataean capital and its cultural interpretation was the subject of a recent exhibition at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City. Organized by Glenn Markoe, curator of Classical and Near Eastern Art at the Cincinnati Art Museum, it consists of numerous artifacts owned by that museum (more than half of the finds unearthed to date), which have been reunited for the first time since their excavation with holdings from the Jordan Archaeologica Museum, Amman.

Markoe is the editor of the 22 essays contained in *Petra Rediscovered: Lost City of the Nabataeans*, the exhibit’s companion volume. This beautiful and useful scholarly work follows the publication of two other books, Maria Giulia Amadasi Guzzo and Eugenia Equini Schneider’s handsome and informative *Petra* and Jane Taylor’s highly readable account, *Petra and the Lost Kingdom of the Nabataeans*. In addition, the handbook-size volume by Christian Augé and Jean-Marie Dentzer, published in Abrams’s *Discoveries* series, provides both the contemporary tourist and armchair traveler with a helpful digest of recent scholarship and a standard of landscape interpretation not available in most guidebooks. Combined, these volumes offer many answers and raise further

questions about Nabataean civilization.

Originally, the Nabataeans were, like other Bedouin tribes of the Arabian desert, a nomadic people living off the meat of their flocks and herds and the wild edible plants they foraged. After mastering camel transport, they gained an advantage over other tribes as caravan traders. Because they were skilled hydrologists and could read the dry landscape with acumen, the Nabataeans were able to drill into its limestone bedrock a chain of well-concealed cisterns for water storage that allowed them to make the long desert crossing that others could not. In this way, they gained control of the movement of frankincense (*Boswellia*) and myrrh (*Commiphora myrrha*) as well as other lucrative products, including silks from China and spices from India. Their caravans traversed the Arabian peninsula from the land the historian Diodorus of Sicily (90–20 B.C.E.) called Eudaimon Arabia and the Romans Arabia Felix (today’s Yemen) overland to Gaza and other ports on the Mediterranean.

Frankincense and myrrh – the aromatics the Magi carried as offerings to the newborn Messiah in Bethlehem – were the basis of a lively

luxury trade for several centuries when Egyptians, Greeks, and then Romans incorporated the lavish burning of incense into their religious practices. These fragrant gum resins from trees found within a limited range of the south Arabian peninsula were a source of great prosperity until the advent of Christianity, when the use of incense in religious ceremonies declined.

Closer to home, the Nabataeans cultivated other sources of wealth, mining copper found in the Wadi Araba and harvesting bitumen from the Dead Sea, the source of asphalt and the material used by the Egyptians for embalming the dead and caulking boats. They also produced an exclusive variety of labdanum (*Labdanum cistaceae*), a resin perfume that they derived from combing the beards of their goats.

How and why and when did the Nabataeans, a nomadic tent-dwelling people, become sedentary and establish a kingdom and capital? By the fourth century B.C.E., according to Diodorus, they had laid claim to a particular rocky stronghold where their accumulated wealth from trade could be safely stored. The narrow cleft, called the Siq, where the Wadi Musa flows between two sheer limestone

walls, gave them a sure means of protection and defense against invaders – and a highly improbable location for their future city.

According to the Greek geographer Strabo, between the third and first centuries B.C.E., a revolution in Nabataean society occurred, and the nomads shifted from a tribal organization and, like other contemporary Hellenistic societies, adopted a monarchical system of governance. Relying on more recent information than that of Diodorus, who characterized the Nabataeans as tent dwellers, Strabo describes Petra as an opulent city with fine houses, gardens, and public buildings.

From this we can infer that, following Alexander the Great’s military conquests and creation of an empire throughout the Mediterranean and extending as far east as Persia, the prosperous Nabataeans had assimilated the Hellenistic artistic and architectural vocabulary that was the lingua franca of this widespread Greek-derived culture. But unlike other Hellenistic cities such as Miletus and Priene, where there is a clearly discernable grid plan and a central public space, Petra possesses a less legible and presumably more

pragmatic plan, one that reveals Nabataean ingenuity in adapting Hellenistic urbanism to their extraordinary site.

Rather than settle more logically on the nearby agricultural plain where the Wadi Musa opens into a spring-fed valley, the urbanizing Nabataeans chose to use their skills as hydrologists to create an intricate system of conduits, tapping regional springs to furnish water to their old stronghold. Channels carved into rock faces as well as stone conduits and clay pipes carried water to storage cisterns. Because the rocky landscape does not absorb rainwater readily, water engineers protected the city from flash flooding by diverting the overflow of the Wadi Musa through a tunnel into an alternative streambed, from which it was channeled into cisterns, thereby increasing the city's water supply. They also constructed dams to assist in the distribution of water both to the urban area where there were gardens and to the alluvial plain where there were agricultural fields.

It was because of this intricate system of water supply and distribution that Petra assumed its irregular urban form and amorphous boundaries. The city's fragmented

settlement pattern was due to the necessity of locating population units according to the availability of water. Topography, too, and the Nabataeans' nomadic cultural background dictated Petra's anomalous urban fabric. Families or tribal units settled on scattered sites, and residential areas followed the contours of the rising slopes. Nevertheless, certain public spaces and urban forms did adhere to the Hellenistic model. A colonnaded axial main street, like the ones in Ephesus and many other Hellenistic cities, followed the line of the regularized Wadi Musi. It led to the Qasr-al-Bint, a large temple built in the first century B.C.E.

Like other societies in the ancient world where similar geological conditions prevailed, the Nabataeans buried their dead in tombs hollowed out of the rock faces of cliffs. After they assumed a monarchical form of government and with their increased wealth from trade, they began to create

magnificent facades for these tomb chambers. The Nabataeans' relations with Egypt gave them familiarity with that country's funerary monuments. They sometimes amalgamated the abstract planar forms of Egyptian architecture with the more ornate naturalism of the Greco-Roman styles that they interpreted with much originality.

Remarkably, this architecture was not built from quarried and carved stone but was carved in its entirety from the natural rock. This meant that craftsmen had to mount scaffolds or scale walls to attain high perches in order to chisel and plane cliff faces according to precise architectural plans. Being almost entirely sculptural in character, Nabataean tomb architecture was one in which there was



little remedy for the careless slip of a stone carver's tool.

Craftsmen from Alexandria may have assisted on projects such as the carving of the Khazneh, the royal tomb that is Petra's most spectacular and famous sight. Located at the end of the Siq's narrow, votive-filled passageway, its sun-washed façade constitutes the visitor's first breathtaking glimpse of Petra. Long before archaeologists had unearthed portions of the sprawling city, its rock-hewn tombs, and particularly this one, riveted the gaze and fired the imaginations of Westerners following Burckhard's footsteps.

Two Frenchmen, Léon de Laborde and L.M.A. Linant de Bellefonds, who traveled together through the inhospitable and dangerous desert to Petra in the early 1830s, and two Englishmen, William Bankes and David Roberts, who went there in 1818 and 1838 respectively, brought back to the West the first views of what romantics of that time considered to be a new window on the mysterious Arabian Orient and the biblical Holy Land. Although Frederick Edwin Church, the nineteenth-century American artist of exotic locales par excellence, only stayed for two days, he was able to re-create

in oil on canvas the dramatic sight of the Khazneh, coming into view at the end of the Siq.

Edward Lear, the landscape artist and writer of nonsense verse, arrived in 1858 and proceeded to produce what is perhaps the most rhapsodic impression of Petra in that era of unrestrained admiration for the exotic. He declared himself to be

overwhelmed with extra surprise & admiration at the truly beautiful & astonishing scenes. The whole valley is a great ruin – temples – foundations – arches – palaces – in inconceivable quantity & confusion: & on 2 sides of the valley are great cliffs, all cut into millions of tombs – magnificent temples with pillars, – theaters etc. so that the whole place is like magic; & when I add that every crevice is full of Oleander & white Broom, & alive with doves, gazelles, & partridges – you may suppose my delight was great. All the cliffs are of a wonderful colour – like ham in stripes; & parts are salmon colour.

The archaeological investigations of Petra since Lear's day have helped to establish a chronology of its artistic and architectural past. It is now clear that the city continued to flourish throughout the

days of the Roman Empire. The impressively large Greco-Roman theater that Lear described with wonder was constructed in the first century C.E. Petra did not decline after Trajan made Arabia a province in 106 C.E. At that time, Petra was made capital of province of Palaestina Tertia and designated a metropolis. Even after the empire became Christianized in the fourth century, Petra's importance as an urban center was beyond dispute, a fact confirmed in 1992 when archaeologists excavated an extraordinary mosaic-filled Byzantine basilica on a ridge north of the Colonnaded Street.

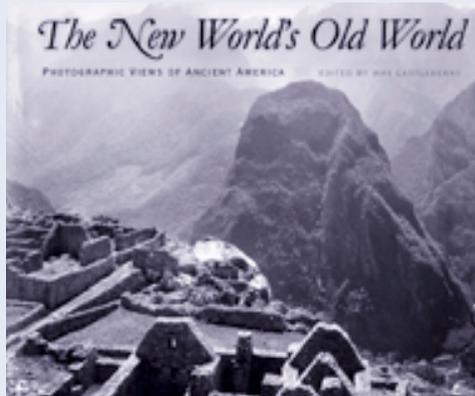
Only with a series of earthquakes and the advent of Islam in the Middle East did Petra's fortunes wane and its population disperse, leaving it abandoned until its rediscovery as a magnificent and evocative ruin. The exhibition "Petra Rediscovered," with its many fine freestanding Greco-Roman sculptures and fragments of Hellenistic and Byzantine architectural ornament, together with Markoe's volume and the other books mentioned above, greatly expand our still-imperfect knowledge of the Nabataeans and their remarkable capital city. – EBR

Photography and the Ancient Americas
The New World's Old World.
Edited by May Castleberry.
(University of New Mexico Press, 2003).

The presence of photography in our lives and its ability to transport us instantly to far-away places is so prevalent today that we tend to forget how relatively recent photographic technology is and how exotic the images early photographer-explorers made of strange locales seemed at the time they were first displayed. Last summer's exhibition at New York's AXA Gallery and its accompanying book, *The New World's Old World*, prompt further observation regarding the European colonizers' brutal conquest of native cultures in the Americas: The conquerors eradicated previous religious practices as much as possible and destroyed many important religious centers, often using them as quarries for the stone with which they built their own monasteries, churches, and cathedrals.

Only with the invention of photography in the mid-nineteenth century did the temporal distance of long-won colonial supremacy make it possible for curiosity to overtake cruelty and for the

romantically mysterious ruins of pre-Conquest cultures to compel attention. It was then that the infant science of archaeology turned its eyes toward the grandeur of "lost" civilizations. Although con-



temporary artists sketched some of the great architectural monuments that were being slowly rediscovered in the Mesoamerican jungle, the American Southwest, and Peru, it was obvious that archaeology's new technological handmaiden, the camera, could document them with an unequivocal, awe-inspiring verisimilitude. The visual power of these ruins and our interest in discerning the character of the civilizations that produced them continue to attract photographers.

The exhibition and book, with catalog illustrations and accompanying essays by Kathleen Stewart Howe, Martha A. Sandweiss, and Edward Ranney, show

how the rediscovered sites of pre-Conquest American civilization have inspired outstanding work from documentary and commercial photographers as well as photographic artists. These essays also help us to understand the various viewpoints, conceptually as well as literally, from which the photographs were taken. In roughly chronological sequence, they were intended to serve as archaeological records, commercial souvenirs, works of photographic art, and, in the case of Josef Abers and others, as design inspiration.

Because of the inherent mysteriousness of the monuments and strangeness of the desert, mountain, and jungle landscapes associated with them (particularly in the eyes of the first non-natives to behold them), they spawned numerous speculations, some unsupportable. For instance, Augustus and Alice Le Plongeon, a husband-and-wife team, believed that the Maya were the Ur-civilization from which the ancient Egyptian and other civilizations were derived. While they interviewed resident natives in the hope that their traditions might illuminate this theory, other early photographer-explorers and archaeologists refused to believe that extant local populations could be descended from the creators of the astonishing monuments they beheld. Some entertained the

fabulous notion that the pyramids of Mesoamerica were the work of architects from Egypt or the lost continent of Atlantis. Some dismissed the Puebloan peoples of the American Southwest as well as Mesoamericans and latter-day Incas as culturally inferior or since, had they been able and so inclined, they could offer no convincing proof of their connection with the impressive civilizations their local ruins presupposed.

Some early daguerreotypes and collodion prints betray this attitude of assumed superiority to the native populations the photographers encountered and the archaeologists employed. Notable in this regard is Alfred Percival Maudslay's stunning 1890 photograph, *The Palace, View of the Western Court and Tower, Looking South*, from Volume IV of his landmark *Biologia Centrali-Americana*, or *Contributions to the Knowledge of the Fauna and Flora of Mexico and Central America*. In it a tall, fair-skinned, athletic-yet-scientific-looking gentleman imperiously presides from an upper niche within a high, vine-entangled tower over a group of native children digging trenches below. In Martha Sandweiss's informative essay, we learn that

the beautiful tonality in Maudslay's meticulous photographs was sometimes achieved by coating structures with whitewash and ash, and that he did not hesitate to move stelae to improve the light on his principal subject. The wheelbarrows in this photograph, which may be only moving dirt, remind us, moreover, of how often these sites were and still are plundered for grave goods, ornamental sculptures, and other valuable items.

The series of daguerreotypes that St. Louis photographer Thomas Easterly made in the early 1850s of Big Mound, one of many impressive earthen pyramids built by the Mississippian people as their civilization reached its climax around 1100 C.E., tells a different story. Here, only Easterly's camera remained to protest Big Mound's destruction as year by year workers' pick axes and shovels dismantled it to allow the grid of newly graded city roads to engulf and level it. Easterly shot his last photograph of Big Mound in 1869, when it was reduced to a mere spire of dirt. In it, there is room for only one worker to pose atop a meager pinnacle while others gaze at the camera from below and horse-drawn carts stand ready to carry away the last artifact-laden debris as fill for an extension of the North Missouri Railroad.

If Easterly's Big Mound series records the callousness that was the price of American progress, other contemporary photographers found in native ruins and their starkly beautiful environs in the American Southwest elements of the Picturesque and Sublime. It was at this time that exploration and mapping of the American West and the romantic naming of ruins was underway. Photo-documentation gave visual proof of the ruins of Cliff Palace at Mesa Verde and other pueblos in the Four Corners area, stimulating a new appreciation of Native American culture as a colorful thread to be woven into the tapestry of national identity.

This was the period in which Yellowstone and other national parks were being created, and archaeological remains linked to natural features became the icons of a new nation with the need to celebrate wonders as great as the cathedrals of Europe. Timothy H. O'Sullivan's 1873 *Ancient Ruins in the Cañon de Chelle, N. M., in a Niche 50 Feet Above Present Cañon Bed* depicts the fine masonry of remote Basketweaver and Anasazi peoples lodged in crevices of sandstone cliffs with streaks of iron-red "varnish." Then thought to have

been the work “the Aztec race...centuries ago,” the presumed forerunner of the builders of Tenochtilan, Montezuma’s glorious city conquered by Cortes, the possibility that these ruins were the ancestral homes of contemporary Hopi, Zuni, and other Puebloan people (as they are considered to be today) was dismissed. By divorcing them from living Native Americans, Anglo-Americans could thus look on them as part of the unencumbered scenic grandeur of their new continental nation.

Photography sustained and advanced this perception of enigmatic antiquity combined with sublime nature as a part of America’s cultural heritage. Today protected as national parks, Canyon de Chelly, Mesa Verde, Chaco Canyon, Hovenweep, and Chimney Rock are places where contemporary archeologists have successfully built the case for a richer, more inclusive sense of national identity.

In Peru, the story of early exploration and documentation – most famously by Hiram Bingham, the discoverer of Machu Picchu, the “lost city of the Incas” in 1911 – is much the same as in Mesoamerica and the American Southwest. At the turn of the twentieth century, local Peruvian photographers, several of whom operated portrait studios, began to doc-

ument the Inca ruins of Cuzco, Sacsayhuaman, Pisac, and Ollantaytambo in the Andean highlands. As tourists began to make their way to Peru in the years following Bingham’s well-publicized find, these photographers discovered that there was a market for souvenir views and postcards. Thus were photographs at this time able to supplant paintings of the kind Guardi once made of Venice for Grand Tourists as a means of sharing and recollecting the scenes of travel.

Some Peruvian photographers were caught up in the movement of *Indigenismo*, which called for a revalidation of the patrimony and traditions of Quechua-speaking people, who had been long suppressed by Spanish settlers. Among these, Martín Chambí, who set up a studio in Cuzco in 1920, served combined documentary, commercial, and artistic ends with an impressive body of work depicting indigenous subjects, Inca architecture, and Andean landscape grandeur. The mestizo culture thus found in Chambí portrayed helped to forge a more authentic Peruvian national identity.

Aviation opened up new opportunities for photographers and new perspectives



Edward Ranney, *Cave of Choquequilla, Huarcoondo Ravine, Cuzco, 1975.*

on landscapes and ruins. Between 1928 and 1931, U.S. Navy pilot Lieutenant George R. Johnson was part of a team making an extensive aerial survey of Peru, which included in addition to Machu-Picchu and Cuzco the circular agricultural terraces at Moray and the geometrically terraced slopes of the Colca Valley. Besides providing an invaluable overview of the landscape, aerial photographs

can be seen as abstractions, patterns in their own right as well as documents of the larger landscape of nature shaped by human intention. In recent times, Marilyn Bridges has mined the expressive potential of the Nazca lines of the Peruvian desert plain, photographing their trapezoidal, spiraling, and biomorphic shapes in the raking light of early morning and late afternoon.

Edward Ranney, who contributed the essay “Images of

a Sacred Geography,” is himself a photographer who has made the poetry of Peru’s past his subject since he was an exchange student in Cuzco forty years ago. Then, he was “deeply struck by the sense of design and masterful interrelationship of Inca stonework and the highland landscape.” Later, Ranney had the opportunity to work with Martín Chambí’s photographer son Victor, and with his own work photographing diverse Peruvian landscapes, has augmented the Chambí legacy. Ranney has focused his camera on the rock shrines, known as *huacas*, by which pre-Conquest Peruvians imbued the Andean landscape with sacred meaning. The spiritually charged *huacas*, part of the exquisite dialog Inca carvers created between sculptural stone and mountain form, are still revered by some Peruvians today.

But what will be the fate of film photography as an art form? Ranney, like others, wonders if “the need for independently created, high-quality images might seem to be waning, particularly as our silver-based black-and-white photographic process will become outmoded in the near future.”

It is true that photography will continue to be rapidly transformed by new digital technologies and the use of remotely controlled satellite or balloon-suspended cam-

eras and that these things will soon make the archives of photographs taken over the past 150 years seem quaintly archaic. It is hard to imagine, however, that the status of the works exhibited and depicted in *The New World’s Old World* will seem less interesting or remarkable. They, after all, contain a record of scientists’ curiosity, travelers’ wonder, and indigenous peoples’ rediscovered cultural pride. As for the landscapes themselves, even if millions of eyes have consumed them and innumerable film and digital cameras have photographed them, their strange beauty remains for tourists and natives alike a source of wonder as well as a cause for conservation. – EBR

Bad History or Lasting Legend?

Myth and History in the Creation of Yellowstone National Park.

by Paul Schullery and Lee Whittlesey.

(University of Nebraska Press, 2003).

National parks have always been reservoirs of national imagination and identity as much as they are natural resources and ecosystems. The landscapes and historic sites that constitute the national park system in the United States, therefore, have

offered a rich territory for postmodern critique and historical analysis of the “traditions” and myths that invest scenic places with cultural significance. In *Myth and History in the Creation of Yellowstone National Park*, however, two eminent Yellowstone historians address a more subtle point: Even the “diminished credibility” of a myth does not – and in some cases should not – undermine its “symbolic power.” Myths, after all, do not depend on veracity for their authority, but rather on a need for the sense of cultural identity grounded in ancestral authority that such stories provide.

As the authors observe, no myth has been more central in the “psychic fabric of the National Park Service and the conservation community” than the story of the creation of Yellowstone National Park in the 1870s. Yellowstone is famous for its wildlife, waterfalls, and geysers, as well as for being the first national park in the United States and the world. Although in the same 1872 bill setting aside Yellowstone Congress acted to preserve Yosemite Valley, which

had become a California state park eight years earlier, in neither case did it explicitly intend to preserve wilderness as largely inviolate nature. Latter-day environmentalists, including scholars, public officials, and many American citizens, nevertheless celebrate the Yellowstone legislation as the beginning of a national park movement, a watershed in the nation’s attitude toward nature, and the beginning of modern wilderness preservation.

Until the 1960s the origin of this “American national park idea” was credited to the members of the 1870 Washburn-Langford-Doane expedition. According to “the campfire story,” the geologists, officials, and local businessmen who made the expedition assembled around a campfire at Madison Junction, where the Firehole and Gibbon rivers meet, on a September evening near the end of their journey. There they discussed the wonders

they had experienced on the Yellowstone Plateau as well as the possibilities for the private disposition and profitable use of the region. But according

to the 1905 memoir of one of the participants, Nathaniel P. Langford, a surprising and magnanimous consensus had emerged as well: Congress should set the entire area aside as a “national park” rather than allow it to be claimed and developed by private owners. Then, according to Langford, following a rapid eighteen months of altruistic advocacy, he and other park backers convinced Congress to enact the park legislation.

For decades tourism promoters and the Park Service presented the campfire story as an accurate history. But by the 1950s historians had begun to suggest that the Madison Junction campfire, if it took place at all, was not where or how the idea for the national park originated. Above all, Aubrey L. Haines (whose two-volume 1977 work remains the authoritative history of the park) pointed out inconsistencies in Langford’s account. He also noted that Jay Cooke, the New York financier acting at the time for the Northern Pacific Railroad, played a crucial role in lobbying Congress to create the park. The planned route of the Northern Pacific’s transcontinental line passed through Livingston, Montana, and the construction of a branch line would generate profits if Yellowstone became a tourist destination. According to Haines (and numerous other histori-

ans), the impulse for the Yellowstone legislation almost certainly originated with Cooke and other operatives promoting the interests of the Northern Pacific. Langford (who worked for Cooke) became the park’s first superintendent; the story he presented in his memoirs was contrived long after the events described.

Schullery and Whittlesey fully endorse and confirm the conclusions of their mentor and fellow Park Service historian, Haines (who died in 2000); they too conclude that Langford probably fabricated the campfire story, for whatever reasons. But the authors also question whether it is always the duty of the historian to “challenge popular myths solely on the basis of inaccuracy.” Quoting historian Patricia Nelson Limerick, they agree that “when the human spirit undertakes to soar, it is not necessarily the duty of the historian to act as air traffic controller and force...a landing.” This attitude currently pervades much official policy at the Park Service. The agency’s chief historian, Dwight T. Pitcaithley, recently observed, “Our collective heritage is as much memory as fact, as much myth as reality, as much perception as preservation.” He believes that there exists among the public a

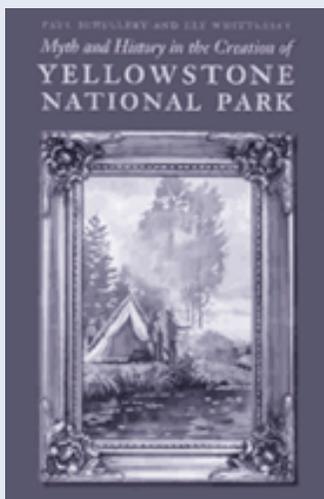
“need for an accessible past and a willingness to embrace myths that are too popular, too powerful, to be diminished by the truth.”

For Pitcaithley, as well as for Schullery and Whittlesey, interpreting the nation’s most scenic and historic places requires a full appreciation of the public’s desire for more – or less – than the whole truth. The art of interpreting mythic sites involves acknowledging beloved myths while avoiding outright deception. For public historians addressing the issue of landscape preservation and interpretation today, the didactic power of popular beliefs can be a tool for engaging the public and promoting a thoughtful discourse on a landscape’s significance. Such opportunities should be exploited – without sacrificing historical accuracy – through thoughtful interpretive programs and materials. Echoing a Yellowstone superintendent of the 1950s, the authors seem to agree that if the campfire story never happened, “We would have been well advised to invent it. It is a perfect image.” This image remains powerful (if not truly “mythic”) for millions of park friends and visitors.

The ideals represented by the campfire story are what most interested the authors and led them to write this fascinating and topical analysis. The narrative of an altruistic

group of citizens acting for the general public benefit rather than any private interest embodies an ideological foundation of modern preservation efforts.

Preservationists, as John Muir would evangelize by the 1890s, should champion values untainted by considerations of profit. The myth of Yellowstone’s creation reinforces the identity of preservation as a struggle of good against greed, and this characterization still motivates many conservationists. Schullery and Whittlesey argue that by merely replacing the campfire story with the “new myth” of the Northern Pacific’s pervasive influence, we create a paradigm that is “just as disappointing and shallow as the old one,” one that presents a “desperately sad view of history.” The campfire story, however false, remains an instructive bit of lore. It is still popular with the public because of the idealism it espouses; it therefore lives on. The authors seem to accept its survival as inevitable and, although not endorsing it as fact, hope that some good can come of it: The “Madison campfire story is without question lousy history, but it is not without greater meaning, even yet.” *Myth and History in the Creation of Yellowstone National Park* will be enjoyed by anyone



interested in the always powerful – and always shifting – relationships between the nation’s great public landscapes and the people who use, love, and extract meaning from them. – Ethan Carr

French Picturesque Landscape Theory in the Ancien Régime
Essay on Gardens: A Chapter in the French Picturesque.
By Claude-Henri Watelet.
Edited and Translated by Samuel Danon with Introduction by Joseph Disponzio.

Whig libertarians in eighteenth-century England claimed authorship of a naturalistic idiom of landscape design and idealized it as a manifestation of their country’s civil freedoms in opposition to absolute monarchy, which they saw embodied in the geometrically ordered gardens of France. French garden creators of the same period were equally prone to assert that their gardens, more irregular and picturesquely composed

than those designed by André Le Nôtre in the previous century, also challenged absolutism. Because of the rivalrous nationalism of both countries, the French maintained that the aesthetic theories that guided them were indigenous and, for the most part, independent of English influence, while the English saw the so-called *jardin anglais* in France primarily as a British invention. The truth, of course, lay somewhere between, for a cross-Channel body of aesthetic theories existed, breeding certain similarities in spite of real differences due to disparate cultural attitudes.

The recent English-language publication of Claude-Henri Watelet’s (1718–1786) *Essay on Gardens* (1774), edited and translated by Samuel Danon, is furnished with a helpful introduction by landscape historian Joseph Disponzio. It provides a means of viewing eighteenth-century French landscape design history

through a contemporary lens, one reflecting the personal prejudices and values of a lively and liberal member of the *ancien régime*. The intensity of the debate about landscape aesthetics, in which Watelet’s voice is only one of several, illustrates the *political* importance accorded to landscape design in the eighteenth century. Watelet’s *Essay* offers readers an opportunity to examine one of the two principal versions of the French Picturesque, the rustic and pastoral (as opposed to the Rococo exotic), and the aesthetic theories underpinning it.

First, one must acknowledge a common philosophical ancestry for both English and French attitudes toward landscape and life in John Locke’s (1632–1704) *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690). An advocate of civil liberty and parliamentary rule, Locke countered the rationalism of Descartes with a philosophy that granted to the individual a domain of personal experience in which sensibility – the experience of sensory stimuli and their effect upon the emotions – was paramount. If Locke’s philosophy was the genesis of the psychological theory that association is the basic principle of all mental activity, Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s (1712–1778) belief in the innate goodness of nature and “natural man” and

the negative effect of “corrupt” civilization on the senses had an equally profound effect on eighteenth-century attitudes in general and landscape design in particular.

It was in this climate of interactive English and French philosophy as conceived by Locke and extended by Rousseau that Romanticism was born and, with it, the kind of garden in which a combination of natural scenery and human art elicited specific mental associations and emotional reactions. Contemporary aesthetic theory held that various types of scenery could induce predictable responses such as melancholy, delight, fear, and pleasure as well as reflections on friendship, history, virtue, honor, and truth.

Because the Picturesque style is closely allied with painting, we can infer the differences between the English and French approaches by observing which painters exerted the most influence on landscape design in the respective countries. In England, Claude Lorrain (1600–1682), the French expatriate painter of Arcadian landscapes set in the countryside outside Rome, was a primary source of inspiration. Eighteenth-century grand tourists traveled to Italy, where they admired the

scenes Claude had painted in the previous century and purchased his canvasses to hang in the galleries of their great houses. It is therefore not surprising that, when they came to create their own three-dimensional landscapes, they chose to evoke on English soil a Claudian vision of the Roman Campagna with its picturesque scatter of antique ruins. Their predilection for Claude was reinforced by the correspondence between his landscapes and the literary works in which upper-class Englishmen were schooled. The pastoral poems of Horace and Virgil, with their nostalgia for the Golden Age, a time in which humankind lived in harmony and contentment nourished on nature’s bounty, struck the same idyllic chord as Claude’s paintings. The French aristocrats of the *ancien régime*, on the other hand, were more attracted to the rustic intimacy and rural picturesqueness found in the work of the seventeenth-century painters Jacob Ruisdael (1628–1682) and Meindert Hobbema (1638–1709).

Watelet was himself a painter and a close friend of the artist François Boucher (1703–1770), whom he asked to remodel the simple bourgeois house on the island in the Seine that he purchased

as his villa retreat. He named his country estate Moulin Joli because of the eye-catching old mill that stood on the property and set about landscaping it in the *style champêtre*, a form of set-piece rusticity that characterizes many of Boucher’s paintings. Influenced by Watelet, other members of the *ancien régime*, including Marie-Antoinette, adopted the *style champêtre* as a fashionable garden idiom.

Even though his approach to landscape was painterly, Watelet claims equality with the other liberal arts for landscape design, considering it allied with, yet different from, painting. He points out that, unlike painting, landscape design is an art more subject to temporal change, involving actual, rather than illusionary, space. He is conscious of movement as a factor to be accounted for in landscape composition, and he speaks of the visual impressions gained from different spatial configurations and proportions as well as from variations in topography. As Disponzio states in his introduction, “Watelet combines the dimensions of space and time to fashion a sophisticated, time-dependent, three-dimensional theory of



picturesque garden composition.”

Watelet’s *Essay* contains no prescriptions, plans, or practical information. Rather, he describes a series of designed landscapes of various kinds and their intended effect on one’s senses and sentiments. To achieve this end, his approach to design is emphatically theatrical. He speaks, for instance, of gardens that are open to the public as if they were stages for “actors of all ranks and all ages, variously attired, [who] will fill these galleries and animate the scene with their lively pantomime.” He takes the reader on a long imaginary walk on paths that “trace softly winding curves” through a *ferme-ornée*, or embellished farm, where a series of pastoral scenes unfold. To further the associations inspired by such scenery, he recommends the addition of didactic poetry in the form of “inscriptions of well-chosen, short passages carved on trees, columns, and obelisks.”

French landscape designers’ affinity for the theater and stage-set design is perhaps what most differentiates their work from that of English designers. While Englishmen found delight in the associative potential of pastoral scenery, either with or without sculptural and architectural

adornment, Frenchmen sought pleasure in theatrical representations of piquant rusticity. Watelet’s *Essay* confirms this observation. It also inadvertently demonstrates the doomed fantasy life of a society caught in the rising tide of democracy without an evolving constitutional system to support the liberal values espoused by such aristocrats as Watelet and his contemporary, the marquis de Girardin (1735–1808), creator of Ermenonville.

Rusticity in Watelet’s eyes equates with a certain Rousseaulike moral perspective, and he seeks to promote a style of landscape design devoid of the excesses of an overcivilized urban society. In the *Essay* he rails against the voluptuous luxury and ostentatious vanity represented by rigidly geometrical gardens containing elaborate *parterres de broderie* and artificially contrived *bosquets*. He believed that such gardens were not only monotonous and insipid, but also morally pernicious, dulling the senses and turning sensibility into empty wit. Watelet, however, does not mention the practical matter of cost: Maintaining such large and highly ornamental gardens was becoming increasingly difficult for many financially insecure aristocrats as the eighteenth

century wore on.

The *fabriques* (ornamental landscape structures) Watelet proposes are derived from humble rural huts rather than from the exotic models recommended by William Chambers, whose *Dissertation on Oriental Gardening* (1772) enjoyed a much greater vogue in France than in his native England. Throughout the *Essay*, Watelet emphasizes simplicity and moderation as the principles of good taste and warns against artifice and opulence. He deplores all hot-house floral cultivation and display, and he dismisses “baths, [Turkish] tents, kiosks, and Chinese pavilions.” His aesthetic leaves no room for these kinds of Rococo features so abundantly lavished by Carmontelle (born Louis Carrogis, 1717–1806) on the Duc de Chartres’ Parc Monceau.

Watelet was very much a man of his time. A well-to-do aristocratic bachelor who lived as a happy member of a *ménage à trois* for many years, he cultivated those sensory responses that fostered a sensuous and sentimental attitude in addition to those promoting moral virtue. Amorous dalliance, as portrayed in the paintings of Jean-Honoré Fragonard (1732–1806), wherein young lovers disport in half-decayed parks where once-trimmed hedges and pruned trees have grown into picturesquely

blowsy bowers, could not have been far from Watelet’s mind when he drew the following picture of the Pleasure Garden:

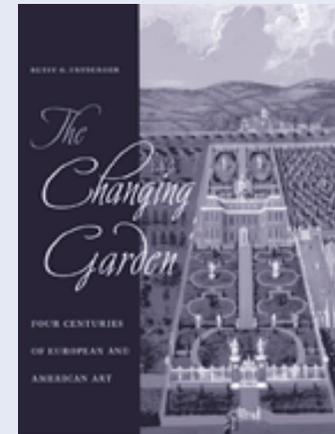
All things submit to comfortable, agreeable, and sensuous uses. Grass-covered mounds will be turned into sofas and beds; small trees and flowers will be trained into festoons, wreaths, interlaced monograms, and garlands. Flowing waters will produce soft sounds or will set hidden mechanisms in motion whose sweet and delicate tunes will excite the birds to redouble their song.

His garden, Moulin Joli, was a famous sight and gathering place for numerous visitors including Marie-Antoinette and Benjamin Franklin as well as Watelet’s fellow artists, *philosophes*, and other members of the creative and political intelligentsia of his day. Its demise during the French Revolution, when a developer bought it, cut down the trees, and parceled it into lots for sale, symbolized the end of an era of aristocratic privilege and the beginning of democratic capitalism, a new motive force in landscape design that continues in our own time. – EBR

**Gardens Viewed,
Gardens Rendered**
*The Changing Garden:
Four Centuries of European
and American Art*
Edited by Betsy G. Fryberger.
(Cantor Center for the
Visual Arts and University of
California Press, 2003).

In her lead essay, “The Artist and the Changing Garden,” Betsy Fryberger notes that “Artists have long observed gardens.” While hardly news to most potential readers, this opening remark does

direct attention to the garden as a site of artistic investigation, whether to reveal the landscape’s own cultural content or that of contemporary works of art. That contact between artist and garden can occur directly or at some remove, depending on time, patronage, and inclination, and it is these transactions between art and landscape that *The Changing Garden: Four Centuries of European and American Art* sets out to display and explain. The book accompanies a traveling exhibition that opened in June 2003 at Stanford University’s Cantor Center for the Visual



Arts, where Fryberger is curator of prints and drawings. Her story commences in the Italian Renaissance and continues in fits and starts through the early decades of the twentieth century. “There are relatively few drawings included by garden designers, because this is not an exami-

nation of the practicalities of design,” explains Fryberger in her introduction. While any curator must be allowed her own position, this proscription of design process is, to my mind, a

serious shortcoming: Design drawings reveal as much about contemporary ideas regarding landscapes as they do about the practice of creating them. Designers always operate within a social, political, and economic context; their representations depict the intentions behind making landscapes as much as drawings by artists portray their appearance and use. Those few design drawings included in the publication bear this out, offering the eye beautiful techniques as well enticing ideas. Drawings by Gertrude

Jekyll for her circa 1908 Upton Grey borders, for example, demonstrate how the construction of her “drifts” were conveyed to her gardeners, while Beatrix Farrand’s 1910 studies for a suburban garden encapsulate many of her ideas about the domestic landscape.

Throughout the book, which is at base a splendid compendium, one finds striking and handsome images that vary in technique from those of the pencil and brush to those of the camera. There are few real surprises here in either the range of mediums or the selection of works, however. Given the profession of the curator, the book’s emphasis on prints and drawings is quite understandable, and many of these are familiar to those in the field: prints by Giovanni Battista Falda and Israël Silvestre, for example, or the oft-reproduced 1573 view of the Villa d’Este by Etienne Dupérac. And where would we be without that goldmine of nineteenth-century photographs of Versailles (and Paris) by Eugène Atget? Why was he able to capture so poignantly the sorrow of aged statuary and the solidity of vegetation in a manner matched by few contemporary photographers? (From this unfairly sweeping dismissal I must except Michael Kenna’s haunting images of Le Nôtre’s gardens.)

Every reader can select his or her own favorites from the book’s many illustrations. One nominee: the sketchy 1879 *Luxembourg Gardens at Twilight* by John Singer Sargent (although the more finished version in the Philadelphia Museum of Art is perhaps a finer work). A second: a sketch by Jean-Baptiste Oudry, circa 1745. Sargent deftly captures the form, light, life, and mood of the gardens in hurried yet confident brushwork. In contrast, Oudry’s black chalk-on-light-blue paper sketch *View of a Château in the Park of Arcueil* uses the most delicate of lines and hatchings to draw the eye to the stairs and cascade that form the ostensible subject of the sketch. White heightens the play of light on architectural forms complemented by textured masses.

If *The Changing Garden: Four Centuries of European and American Art* presents a handsome, well-produced album of landscape images, its ultimate premise is difficult to discern. Even its title hints at a confusion of purpose. Is this a book about gardens or about art? And even the word *garden* is problematic, as the book’s essays and illustrations nominally equate parks with gardens. Presumably the editor

regards the two as synonymous, but why this is so we never learn. Their scale, the nature of the activities within them, their public accessibility, and their level of maintenance have all colored our respective readings of park and garden, and they do not easily lend themselves to simple conflation. Given the conceptual oscillation between the two terms in the lead texts and catalog entries, perhaps the more generic term *landscape* might have been more appropriately used throughout the book. Certainly, the aspects of change central to the title are evident throughout, especially to a reader already knowledgeable about landscape history. However, given the essentially nonchronological presentation of material, stylistic diversity due to cultural change from period to period is far from evident.

The book, like the exhibition, is divided into three thematic areas: Designing Gardens, Historic Gardens, and Garden Gatherings. These categories, unfortunately, are of only limited utility. The majority of the images in Designing Gardens, for example, simply depict landscape elements and offer no sense of how parks and gardens were actually designed and realized. Then follows Historical Gardens: Are not virtually all the landscapes in the exhibition and catalog historic gardens? Why were the places in this section sin-

gled out and grouped here as somehow distinct? One gets the feeling that their inclusion depended on what images could be found rather than on their cultural significance per se. The third section, Garden Gatherings, is the truest to the topic, although even here the images wandered considerably in narrative content. Unfortunately, the rampant number of subsections conjures the impression that every two images warranted yet another section. In some ways, in terms of its structure the book should be called *136 Landscape Images in Search of a Thesis*, suggesting the structural ideas arrived only after the selection of works.

In spite of these criticisms of the project as a whole, several of the lead essays are quite strong. Claudia Lazzaro’s “Representing the Social and Cultural Experience of Italian Gardens in Prints” addresses its topic directly if broadly, laying a sturdy foundation if not constructing a complete edifice. More detailed and engaging is Elizabeth S. Eustis’s “The Garden Print as Propaganda.” Eustis clearly directs her essay not to garden history alone as she focuses more on prints and books concerning the garden. To those unfamiliar with the topic, this will be the book’s strongest contribution.

Most puzzling is Paula Deitz’s hagiographic paean to contemporary landscape architect George Hargreaves. As no images illustrate landscapes realized in the years between the early twentieth century and the 1980s, this essay is a complete anomaly. And in its attribution of Crissy Field in San Francisco – the sole project by Hargreaves Associates included in the book – to Hargreaves alone, it unfortunately diminishes the importance of his collaborating partners and staff. Equally perplexing are the maquettes for Frank Gehry’s fish sculpture and Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen’s *Spoonbridge and Cherry* at the sculpture garden of the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, which are both left somewhat adrift.

Two sets of structural problems undermine the argument implicit in the text: first, the issues of park and garden mentioned above; second, whether the book is about the landscapes or their representations. Some descriptions and essays focus on the gardens, others on the artists and the works. Some prints and photographs feature landscapes as the settings but do not really address the subject of the garden. Can we accept that any image made or taken in a landscape is about that landscape? Or does the landscape provide only a setting that at times is almost extraneous to

the true subject? There is little consistency throughout the text in pursuing one path or the other. To be fair, one might argue that this approach could provide an intertwined mosaic of garden history, artist biography, and art practice that showcases the inherent richness of the topic. I would agree. But given the lack of connections and the basic fracture of the text, if this were the goal, it has remained unachieved. One also misses a bibliography, as well as some background on the contributors, and the index is unfortunately limited to proper nouns.

Other scholars have examined the same subject, among them *Il Giardino dipinto nella pittura lombarda dalSeicento all’Ottocento* (Skira, 1995). Given its restricted corpus and time frame, this small publication is far more coherent than *The Changing Garden*. In the former, personal images of landscapes are successfully played off more rigorous architectural views of the villas and their gardens. In *Gardens on Paper: Prints and Drawings, 1200–1900* (National Gallery of Art and University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990), editor Virginia Clayton adopted a more directly chronological approach, which makes this earlier work much easier to follow. Interestingly, many of the same images appear in

both *Gardens on Paper* and *The Changing Garden*, suggesting the existence of an historical or curatorial canon, or perhaps just the availability of certain images for loan.

In some ways, Mac Griswold's 1987 *Pleasures of the Garden* offers, well, the greatest pleasures in books of this genre. It would appear that the Metropolitan Museum of Art commissioned Griswold to explore its collections and select materials that featured the garden in some way – any way. Neatly circumscribed by a single resource, the author looked squarely at the subject matter and devised headings as diverse as Gardens of Paradise and Follies & Features. Of course, the categories appear almost completely arbitrary, but the volume does offer the reader a panoramic view that includes the wealth of landscape traditions in the Middle and Far East as well as the West. While certainly not tightly woven into a single thesis, the book treats readers to a feast of garden images found on screens, in rugs, and on ceramics, as well as in prints, drawings, and paintings.

Similarly viewed as an album of garden and park images, *The Changing Garden: Four Centuries of European and American Art* succeeds admirably. Perhaps it is demanding too much to seek contributions to

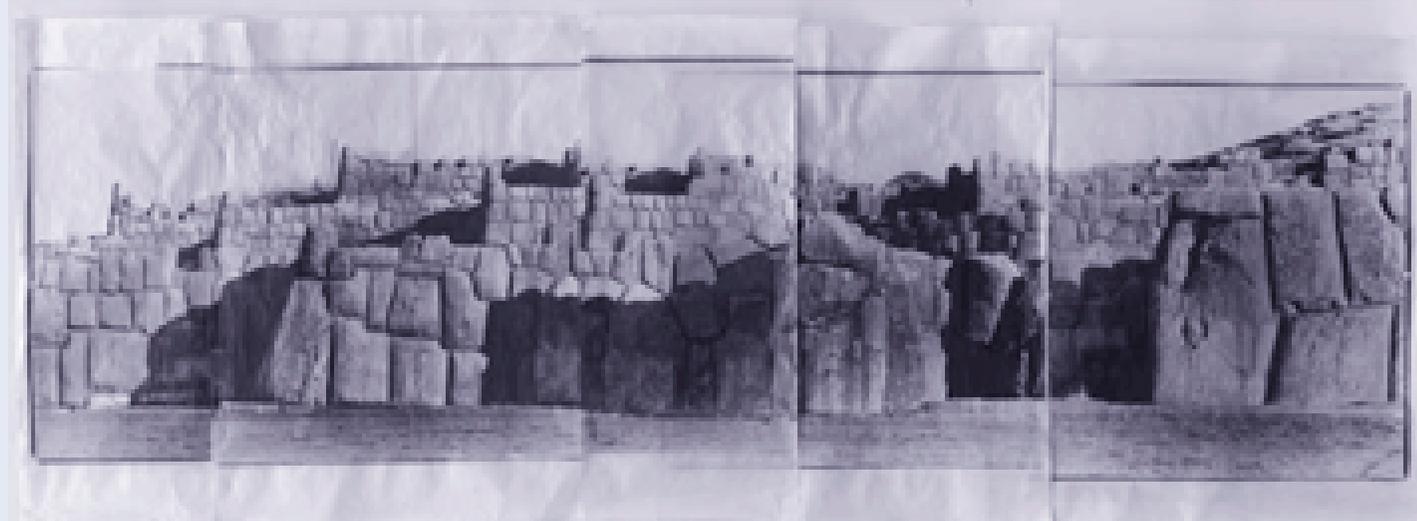
landscape history in shows and books such as these. Nevertheless, despite the considerable interest and beauty displayed by many of the works, the path that leads us through these gardens ultimately provides only a pleasant ramble. With a more instructive purpose and more focused structure, *The Changing Garden* might have taken readers from garden to garden in a way that also heightened their understanding of landscape design history. – Marc Treib

Profound Stoniness, Fragile Remains: A Photographer's Romance with Ruins

An Exhibit of Photographs by Jean Pagliuso: Fragile Remains.

(Marlborough Gallery, New York, January 8–February 7, 2004).

Like sentence fragments, ruins elicit imaginative conclusions. Over time, seemingly indestructible structures intended to stand for all eternity have been abandoned or partially destroyed through conquest, migration, or general shifts in cultural values; their meaning has been lost, and their forms have become enigmatic. Reinterpreting them is the work of scholars, but they often elicit another response in artists and writers. Poems such as Shelley's "Ozymandias" have been



inspired by the not-knowing, the mere romantic speculation regarding origins. Similarly, travelers experiencing the Roman Forum by moonlight or beholding the massive vine-clad pyramids of the Maya or the crumbling temples at Angkor Wat have been struck with wonder at past architectural achievement while pondering the fugitiveness of power. In the eighteenth century, landscape designers saw beauty in the relics of lost time, and because of the associations these had with the native past or classical antiquity, they incorporated ruins – both real and artificial – into their designs.

The poetics of stony ruins and the mystery of time as the indifferent destroyer of human endeavor was the subject of photographer Jean Pagliuso's recent exhibition, "Fragile Remains," at the Marlborough Gallery in New

York. Although many monuments and landscapes are currently protected by organizations such as the World Monuments Fund, Pagliuso sees even the most seemingly timeless and durable as hauntingly fragile in their continuing slow decay. She chose to convey her vision of the ephemeral character of these ancient remains through gelatin silver photographs printed in light gray or pale sepia tones on handmade Kaji paper. To further emphasize her theme of fragility, she arranged them as diptychs, triptychs, and polyptychs, piecing together the conjoined images with edges slightly lifted and barely mismatched. These minor disjunctions among the composite photographs' parts are perhaps an indirect allusion

to the crumbling and slippage of the stones portrayed.

Pagliuso's evocative depictions of Machu Picchu, the Inca fortress of Sacsayhuaman guarding Cuzco, the Anasazi ruins found in Chaco Canyon and in the creviced walls of Canyon de Chelly, the fretwork friezes of the temple platform at Mitla, and scenes from Cappadocia, Puja, and the Ganges are of particular interest to the students at the BGC because of the Garden History and Landscape Studies program's broad purview, which includes ancient ritual sites as well as vanished, partially destroyed, and restored historical landscapes. We examine the theories underlying historic preservation, questioning whether a strict period approach is as satisfactory as one that perceives landscape in more fluid terms, as a testament of human belief

Jean Pagliuso, *Sacsayhuaman*, 2003. Gelatin silver print on handmade Kaju paper, polyptych. Courtesy Jean Pagliuso and Marlborough Gallery, New York.

systems and relationships with the natural world over time. Pagliuso's original photographs and accompanying limited-edition albums of *Fragile Remains*, each containing 23 images digitally printed with archival pigmented inks, also point out the dependence of our field on photographic representations. This makes us aware of how we must read the implications of photographers' intentions as well as those of the creators of particular landscapes, since, when we cannot travel there, it is through the camera's vantage point and the photographer's vision and technique that we see them. – EBR

[viewpoints]

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