

The Role of the Artist in a Developing Neighbourhood Garden:  
the Case of Dungarven Rd. Lot in the Community of Jamaica Plain, MA

by

David B. Smith

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Signature of Author: \_\_\_\_\_  
Department of Architecture  
May 9, 1997

Certified by: \_\_\_\_\_  
Edward Levine  
Professor of Visual Studies  
Thesis Supervisor

Accepted by: \_\_\_\_\_  
Edward Levine  
Professor of Visual Studies  
Head, Visual Studies Program



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ABSTRACT

An exploration of the role of the artist in a developing neighbourhood garden through the examination of the following topics: wilderness, landscape, gardens, community gardens and various artists' work in the land.

Leading to the proposal for a public art project to be installed in the Dungarven Rd. garden in Jamaica Plain Massachusetts. The project involves the sinking of a well/cistern, and the implementation of a rainfall collection system to supply the garden with a reliable source of water.

Thesis Supervisor: Edward Levine

Title: Professor of Visual Studies



# Readers

Dennis Adams

Associate Professor  
Visual Arts Program  
Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Jan Wampler

Professor  
Department of Architecture  
Massachusetts Institute of Technology



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*Garden -Late August* David B. Smith



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## *Introduction*

In the community of Jamaica Plain Massachusetts, tucked away near Franklin Park, lies a special parcel of land. To any passerby this land may appear to be nothing more than one of the many abandoned lots littering the impoverished neighbourhoods of a city, however, upon closer inspection something truly remarkable is revealed. Just past the rusty chain-link fence and overgrown dogwoods, one can find rows of Sunflowers and Irises. Nestled beside the cracked asphalt, cultivated soil nurtures vine ripend tomatoes, basil and cabbage. A freshly cut area of grass, becomes an unrestricted communal playground for a curious Chow and an overly excited Dalmatian. The dogs' owners, an African American woman and a Hispanic man, carry on a conversation with a newly arrived Chinese immigrant who is beginning to harvest his squash. This unassuming parcel of land is really quite unique, and in many ways can be viewed as a microcosm of the larger community.

Jamaica Plain is a community rich in cultural diversity, and home to many different people from all walks of life. There are wealthy and poor, young and old, straight and gay, and representatives of dozens of ethnic groups. The residents do not simply exist in isolation from one another in their respective homes, they live together and have an equal share in their community. This is not to suggest that Jamaica Plain does not have any problems. Like any urban community it has its share of crime, racism, and intolerance. However these problems continue to diminish in the face of a growing understanding for the value of diversity.

To physically describe this land in terms of its location, use, and history is a relatively easy task, however, when one attempts to define it in a larger sense the task becomes much more complex. For instance, one can not characterize this land, its surroundings, and the activities of the people who frequent it, in simple terms. Technically the land is owned by the City of Boston, specifically the Public Facilities Department, however, the people of the community have a strong sense of ownership of the site and participate voluntarily in its maintenance. It is located in a residential area, yet it is bordered on one side by a densely wooded area. It is not a community garden, yet there are gardens on the site. It is not a park, yet neighbours gather there to engage in recreational activities and social events.

In order to fully comprehend the significance of the site as it pertains to both the neighbourhood and community one must first embark on an exploration of the site's physical parameters and history. Once this has been established, it will then be necessary to examine some of the terms which are frequently used in discussions of the outdoors, specifically wilderness, landscape, and garden. I begin my investigation with wilderness because I felt it important to begin with a term which suggests the absence of human intervention, and then progress to landscape which is somewhat ambiguous, and finally move to gardens which suggest the opposite. I will refer to *nature* throughout my investigations, and I use the term (except where indicated) to mean the controlling forces of the universe, which all life is both subject to, and created from. Additionally, it should be noted that wilderness, landscape, and gardens are both physical and cultural aspects of nature. Finally, an exploration of the history of Community Gardens will be necessary to locate the site within a broader context.

After these preliminary explorations and examinations, the focus of this paper will then turn to the role of the artist in the Dungarven Rd. neighbourhood garden. This will begin with an analysis of some examples of different artists' work in the land, specifically the work of Alan Sonfist, Ian Hamilton Finlay, and Newton and Helen Mayer Harrison. This analysis will not only illustrate the various ways in which artists have worked in the land, but furthermore help to contextualize the work which will be proposed for the Dungarven Rd. site. The next section will be a project overview, which will introduce the work and examine some of the themes associated with its major component (water). The final section will be the project description, which will consist of a detailed account and analysis of each of the elements of the work itself.

## *Site Location and Description*

The site is located in an area of Boston Massachusetts called Jamaica Plain, approximately five miles south of the centre of the city, and within a five minute walk of Franklin Park. The immediate area surrounding the site is known as *Stoney Brook*. The land is bordered by two roads (Dungarven to the north and Williams to the west), private property to the south, and densely wooded land to the east. Additionally, there are two parcels of privately owned land with houses, which effectively carve out a rectangle from the site's western side on Williams Street. The perimeter of the site measures 1,274 feet, and the total area is 5923 sq. yards. (fig. 1a).

Roughly one third of the total land is used for gardening, and consists of a variety of plots (fig. 1b). The majority of these plots are in the main planting area, while others line the path opposite to this area and can also be found scattered along the north side of the property. The location of the individual beds in the main planting area are not fixed, and change from year to year as new gardeners come to the site. Furthermore, none of the plots on the site are of a similar size or shape, nor is there any restriction placed upon what may or may not be planted. Each year in the spring anyone interested in securing a plot gathers at the site for an informal meeting, where plot location and size is determined through availability of space. The only rule imposed is that if one claims a piece of land, then he or she is obliged to plant and maintain it through the course of the summer.

Two large grassy areas are set aside for non-planting purposes, which allows other area residents to use the space for recreation. These spaces are maintained by those who keep plots in the adjacent planting areas. The person or people tending each plot are asked to cut the grass once per season. The communal lawn mower is kept in the yard of a nearby house to which all gardeners have access. An additional one fifth of the total land area of the site is presently unused, and could be used for more planting areas if the need arises. There is a portion of the site which is paved (most likely a former driveway), and since the cost of the removal of the asphalt is prohibitive, it is likely to remain in its present state. Most of the site is surrounded by a fence, and because it is cut and open in many areas, it has no real purpose other than to demarcate the extent of the property.

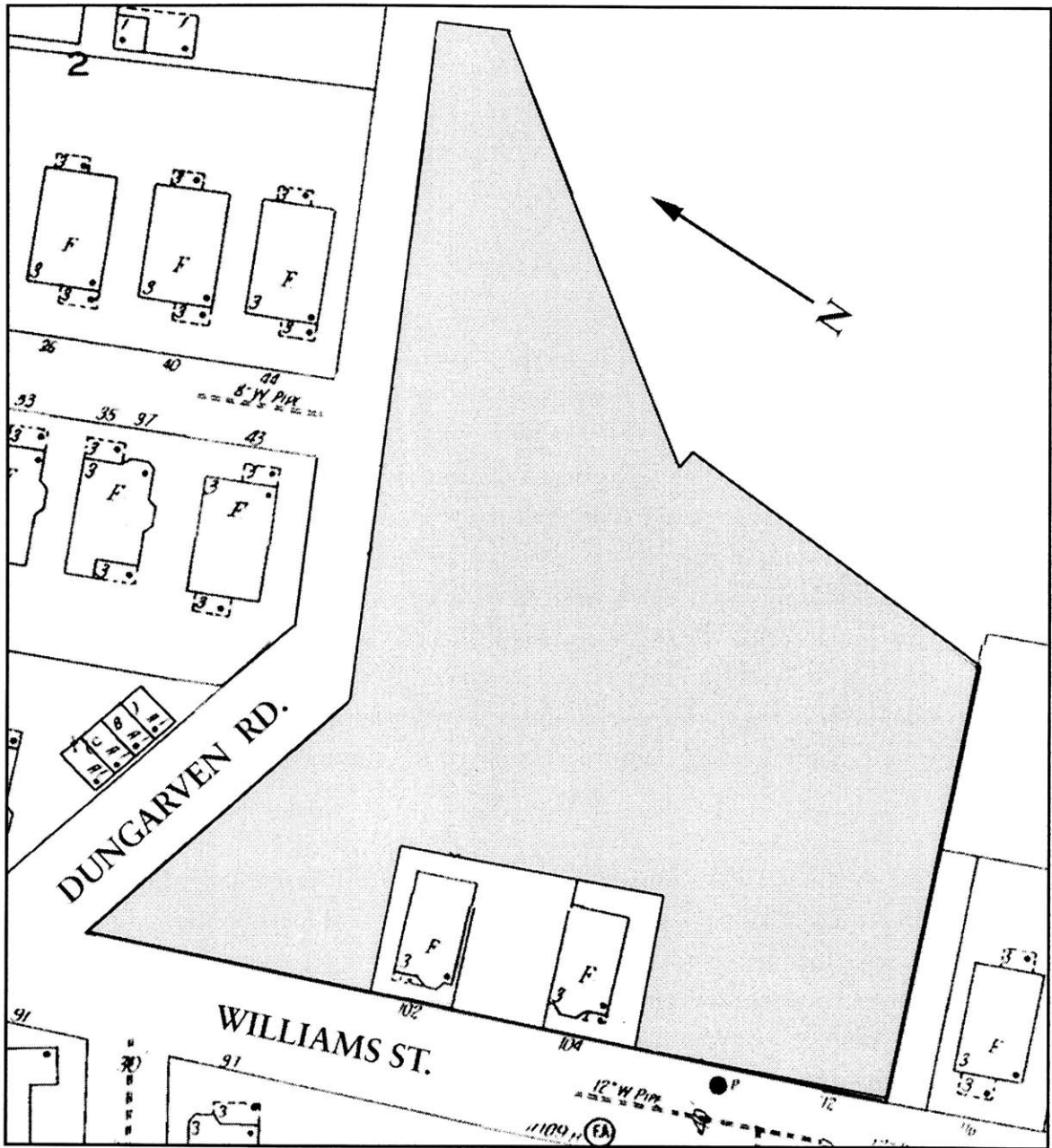


fig 1a.



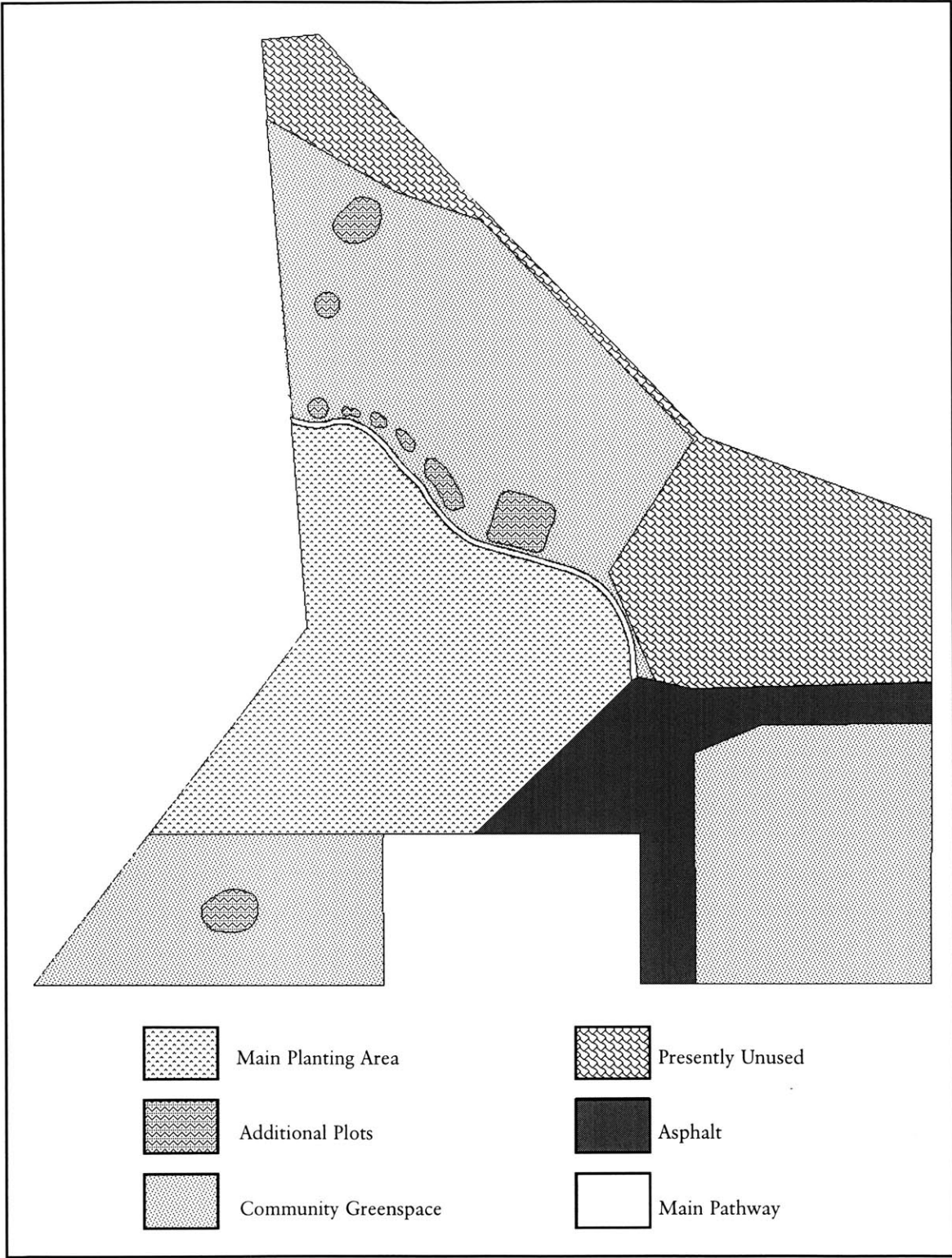


fig 1b.

A simple classification of this site is somewhat elusive, as it does not fall easily into any predefined categories of gardens or parks. There have been a number of books of late which deal specifically with gardens in urban centres which are particular useful in outlining the social, cultural, historical and political complexities of urban gardening. Of particular importance are Sam Bass Warner's book, *To Dwell Is To Garden*, and *Transitory Gardens, Uprooted Lives* by Diana Balmori and Margaret Morton. Each of these books deal with a major urban centre; Boston in Warner's book, and New York in Balmori's. These books also give various examples of different kinds of gardens, from those established through official means, to the temporary 'squatter' gardens, where usually one or two people claim a small area of land on a vacant lot for their planting purposes. Diana Balmori has separated urban gardens into three distinct categories. The first is the *Official Community Garden*, which is the oldest type of urban garden and is frequently characterized by an enclosing fence, raised planting beds (uniform in shape and size), and have no lawns or open areas.

Originally the initiative of individuals or communities, they have grown in popularity and garnered the support of many city social organizations, which have begun new community garden efforts. As a result, government and social agencies, by providing the community with professional help in layout, design, and form, have shaped these gardens.

Balmori and Morton, *Transitory Gardens, Uprooted Lives*, p.11

Her second category of urban garden is the *Appropriated Garden*, which usually begins as an abandoned lot and is then appropriated by local property owners for use as a garden. Sometimes these lead to official *Community Gardens*, but more often because of a "great distrust of government agencies, bureaucracies, and rules" (Balmori, p.30), the garden makers prefer to continue a "guerrilla" type of gardening. Her final category is the *Squatter Garden*, which is the main focus of her book. This type of garden is the most temporary and the most personal, they are made by homeless people who claim a small patch of urban ground for their own use. They usually live, eat, and sleep on their site, and since it is so temporary in nature, they often substitute plastic flowers and stuffed animals for living plants.

The Dungarven Rd. site most closely fits the category of the *Appropriated Garden*, although it is more community oriented and organized than the *Appropriated Gardens* in Balmori's book. There is no pressing need for the residents to try and

establish an official community garden, as they are quite content with its present condition. Furthermore obtaining the land in its present configuration for community garden purposes would be next to impossible, as such large parcels of land are much too valuable to the city for development. More importantly if the city were to give a small portion of the land to the residents for a community garden, there would be no open space for recreation, and inevitably the plots would become small and uniform to maximize the use of the remaining space. It is from this position that some local residents argue the only sensible way of maintaining the character of the site, is to preserve it in its present use and configuration. It is not only a garden, a park, a communal meeting place, it is a synthesis of all of these things. It has grown to become something truly special, the sustenance of life, and the fertile ground of a community.

The recent American community garden movement is propelled by groups of neighbors who organize themselves to clear or secure their own land and to maintain their garden parcels. It is a politics of self-help and local empowerment, not a politics of charity or reform of the poor.

Sam Bass Warner, Jr. *To Dwell Is To Garden*, p.xiii



Site Photo August 1997 - David B. Smith



## *Site History*

The following history of the site is in the form of two informal interviews conducted in April of 1997, with three people who have been actively involved with the garden from its beginnings. I have chosen this format because it best represents the oral history of the site, and that any attempt on my part to summarize their words, would dilute the richness of that history. The first interview was with Jan Wampler (JW), area resident and community activist. The second was with John Carrol (JC), area resident and gardener, and William Mitchell (WM), area resident and “official observer”. The interviews in there entirety constitute some four hours of tape, and I have included here only a small portion of each for the purposes of brevity.

### *A conversation with Jan Wampler*

---

DS - Where do you live?

JW - Thirty nine Kenton road.

DS - And how long have you lived there?

JW - Since 1970.

DS - What was the relationship of your house to the garden in terms of the land itself, prior to your moving there?

JW - Well there's oral history involved, so there is nothing that I have seen that's been written, and all of my oral history comes from the woman who used to live in the house next door to me who was born in that house and died when she was ninety-nine years old. So she was almost a century of verbal, oral history. What she told me was that my house...well first of all Jamaica Plain didn't used to be Jamaica Plain, it used to be Dedham or a piece of Dedham, and what she tells me is that my house was owned by the mayor or whatever the city officer would have been at that time, 1860's. The front two rooms of my house was used as an office for whatever business there was, and he was a farmer and that my, what I call my barn was his carriage barn. What she says is that the original barn or pieces of the original barn, which I don't think existed when I came here, was on the site of the

stables. That whole area between Kenton Road and Forest Hills was a farm for farmers. So that's the connection that she told me. Somewhere in the 1870's or 1880's I believe, a long time ago, that became the barn for the stables as I understand it.

DS - Can you tell me a little bit about your own memories of the stables?

JW - I think I was attracted to the neighbourhood for two or three reasons, one that Kenton Road was a beautiful street with mixed kinds of people, different ethnic groups; it was a wonderful street. The second reason was that there was a little oasis back there because of the greenery and at that time the school was a nursing home and it was much better kept back then. The third reason was the stables was like a little community center for the kids. Both my daughters hung out at the stables and rode horses, and were introduced to horses through the stables. It couldn't get any better, it was like a little small town in the middle Boston. At that time, there was just a very small stable owned by a man named Mr. Wright and he had a couple of daughters who ran it. There used to be several barns and then one burnt down but I would think that there was never more than twenty horses. Now this is early, this is the seventies. They went through several owners, after he died...he never really made an economic profit out of it, he did it because he loved horses. And by the way the stables were also the source of manure for the neighbourhood and everybody had gardens. And I learned about gardening from the people in the street. Anyways he died and his daughters couldn't keep it economically, then it went to the city for back taxes. And then the first thing that happened was the city was auctioning the land off and a private developer came in who was going to put a tremendous number of houses on that site. And basically the neighbourhood didn't want that and was really angry at the city for doing that, and then somebody...Mr. Brown came forward with the proposition that he would buy it as a stable, and keep and use it as a stable. Which he did in the late seventies. But I guess he got into economic trouble or something happened. And then another guy named Eddie got involved and he took it over and lived there above the stables, then the city claimed it again through back taxes, but I am not sure about that. And then through a lot of activity in the neighbourhood the PFD (Public Facilities Department) decided to put it out for an RFP (Request For Proposal) for stables. And there were three or four people who were interested in running the stables. A couple of people wanted to keep it the same scale as it was, but then it became pretty clear to us that in order to make it work economically as stables, it would have to be larger. And there was this man that made a proposal that would keep some of

the old stable which was historic, and build a new arena, and do quite a bit of investment. And it would become a major community place. He worked on the proposal for four or five years and finally just decided he couldn't wait any longer and couldn't get the right financing for it and left. In the meantime the city tore down some of the buildings, and I think all of us were worried that the city would go back to the original proposal to build a number of condominiums. And sometime during this period, although I don't know exactly when, John started the gardens. And then there became a kind of division between the people who had never known the stables and the people who had. And the people who knew the stables knew all the history and were worried that the city would pull a fast one; they saw the stables as a stabilizing way of keeping the land. The people who started the garden wanted to see it kept as a garden, and no one was opposed to it being kept as a garden either, but the question is, if you are squatting on land, what is the guarantee that the city won't sell the land for housing. So I think there was a division in the neighbourhood between those who wanted to keep it as a garden and those who had been there long enough to see what would happen if that happened... All I have done is kept my fingers crossed that it will remain as it is now, and it will stay that way. It's a wonderful open space in the neighbourhood, I saw kids playing there last night, and so it has many different uses; park, meeting place, as well as a garden. So I think, and I can't speak for the neighbourhood, but from my perspective if it could remain that way it would be wonderful.

### *A Conversation with John Carrol and William Mitchell*

---

DS - Where do you live?

WM - I live at 140 Williams St., which is about one hundred yards from the old stables.

DS - And you John?

JC - I am residing on the premises of the *Boston Beer Company*, located at 31 Germania St. here in Jamaica Plain.

DS - How long have you lived there?

WM - I lived at 148 for about twelve years, and then about three years ago I

bought 140, and I bought it for the yard...for gardening, and to keep all of my crap back there.

JC - I've lived in a number of places in Jamaica Plain...on the corner of Shurland and Gartland in the green house, and at 31 Kenton road.

DS - What was your very first memory of the garden?

WM - Of the stable? My first memory of the stable or the garden, because it was a stable before it was a garden.

DS - The stable.

WM - My very first memory was the fire. It used to be an actual stable, there was a large metal building and there was a riding ring that wasn't used, very dark, unilluminated, dull red, corrugated, hideous, and the old wooden stable on the outside had a very rustic look. There was a chain link fence all around, and there were some really run down horses, and what is now beautiful grass was all these mud lots because the horses ate every blade of grass. It was run by a woman named *Rene*, who used to be a guy named *Ed*, it was a black person who worked over in the courthouse in Brookline and was a very strange bird. And I was aware but not especially interested in the neighbourhood; it was much more run down at the time when I moved in. One night there was a fire in the stables and the fire trucks came, and a bunch of us ran down just to see it and then we ended up becoming a part of a crowd trying to get the horses saved. But horses don't have enough sense to lie down when there is a fire so they stand up and breath in the smoke. The outside doors to the stalls were nailed shut with plywood, and the inside halls were blocked by the fire. So a bunch of us came in with a crowbar and tried to pull out the plywood so we could get the horses out. Some of the horses died, and of course the fist door we opened the horse was on the ground dead from smoke inhalation. So we got a few horses out and a few died, and that was my first night at the stables that very dark night with smoke and screaming horses.

DS - John, what was your first memory of the stables?

JC - Well..there was some horses on the premises when we moved into the neighbourhood although the area was certainly in disrepair. What Mitchell said in regards to Rene, I can recall that much about the stables. After the fire it pretty



much it was pretty much an empty lot. And being of a radical nature, you know, I felt perhaps we being in the city, we should use the land to actually come up with some good use. So at that point being that the horses were gone, and the stable was gone, I saw the possibility of actually starting gardening in the area, but I have been gardening now for thirty years. I guess my message was that we garden on the planes of spirituality and intellect. I wanted to do something radical with it, like start a garden, whereas we take care of a soup kitchen, whereas we re-appoint young folks that may really need a main interest to promote their self-esteem. So, in that area there, there was a drawing board more or less to project something spiritually deep, you know, something different.

DS - You speak of the stables being gone, were they torn down? And when were they physically removed?

JC - They were physically torn down but there was a period of time there that there was some remnants of it. It was quite a nice place to tell you the truth, a place where the neighbourhood would come and meet. It had a lot of character, it added a lot of character to the neighbourhood; making the neighbourhood very unique in the sense that not too many neighbourhoods choose to boast, but we chose to boast about having a nice stable.

WM - There was a time after the stables became really decrepit, I think it was down to one or two horses which would often slip through the fence and then all the kids in the neighbourhood would chase them around. Rene got increasingly difficult and distant, hostile and strange. And when Rene left, the city finally condemned the building because there was no running water. There was a period of a couple years when the stable was regarded as not an aggressive place, but a hostile place. People rarely cut through the stables, very few people took the path through. The old metal building was used a lot for dumping trash, old hot water heaters and things like that. It was a gloomy, spooky kind of place. It was not an inviting type of place at all. People weren't interested in using it as part of the neighbourhood, until John came along. And John didn't go in there deliberating about the stable, he just planted a garden, and planted another garden, sort of randomly picking different spots not and exactly going by any sort of grid just picking the next spot he wanted to put in a garden he just put in a little garden. He sort of demonstrated it wasn't a fierce place, and he was the only person who grew anything in there for two years before other people started gathering around at all. There were just a few people who got brave enough to go in because we didn't

own it, and it was sort of gloomy and spooky, and the big metal building was sort of scary.

DS - Was there anyone left in the stables?

WM - Rene had left and it was abandoned. But not a positive abandoned it was a very negative sort of place.

JC - That whole big plot of land there became full of weeds, and they started to do some dumping in there. I really wanted to see the neighbourhood have some area that they could...actually I was very idealistic at the time, I was into Thoreau and those folks. I really believed kids were a product of their environment, and I really thought the garden was a good place to have a sort of school. All of our grandfathers and great grandfathers knew certain things that have gotten lost as far as nurturing things and being patient. I was looking at the garden and I was thinking that this is a place to actually spunk up the neighbourhood and bring about an awareness, of how much they have forgotten, not just how much they can learn. I found it a very interesting plot.

DS - And when you came to the site, what made you decide start a garden?

JC - Well I've been doing this for thirty years. I had been doing it for twenty years probably at that time. I like going into projects, you know, and planting.

DS - So tell me about the changes that you have seen? What changes have you seen in the community itself?

JC - He's the watchful one. Why don't you ask him?

DS - O.K. Mitchell, you have described your role in the past as an "official observer", what exactly does that entail?

WM - MIT teaches you to see life as a series of problems, life is one big problem set. After you have been in school for a while your whole life is, fix all the problems. It's not problems that are made, but problems in that you've got a certain frame of mind and a certain approach to things. You just see what's happening around you and you search out, you don't even search out, automatically you see the discontinuity and the contradictions and that becomes your problem. The next

problem in your life's problem set. And somehow, from being a science nerd I got into the neighbourhood, and I looked at the process of why the neighbourhood -our neighbourhood in particular- was so frustrating and dysfunctional, so lacking in so many basic services. You see kids walking down the street, there would be four or five kids with baseball bats and they would make me nervous. Now when I was a kid I wouldn't be nervous I would think they were going to play baseball, but now you never know. So there were all these things that were happening and I started getting interested in why things weren't working as they should be, as they worked when I grew up. I started working on one little thing after the other, I would see something that would appear to be a problem and I would try to figure out how to solve and fix it. And the stable for me ended up being the central theme of the neighbourhood. The stable had been looked at by a developer who was going to put up a whole bunch of units of housing, and led by Jan Wampler to a large extent, the neighbourhood rose up and more than the neighbourhood all of Jamaica Plain rose up in mass, and squashed the plans. Then I got interested in the neighbourhood and I decided what the neighbourhood needed was people just looking at each other, and seeing each other, and having some human interaction, so tried to get this thing called "the party of the month" going. So that every month in the stable, you would have a different kind of a theme party, a yard sale, or a barbeque, or a volleyball game, just so people were thrown into contact. I figured once they knew each other and established a sense of empathy, then it would just go from there. And through all of this, John, without getting involved too much with the politics and controversy just kept doing more gardening, and people began to see it as a friendly place. And because people fought about it, it was now a resource and it was valuable, and more and more gardeners came. Were at the point now, where we are trying to find a balance between community open areas and gardens.

DS - Where do you see the garden going now?

JC - I would like to see the wild expressions, where you have open space, but somehow primitive in the sense of non-structured. I would like to see, and I would hope that people come to the garden with a certain philosophy, an open philosophy because that's where you draw; where people are sensitive to nature and are aware of things outside the tangible.



*Site Photo-Stables* August 1993 - Alan Ihrer



*Site Photo-Stables Demolition* August 1993 - Kim Kudrna

## *Wilderness and the Wilds*

Wilderness has a deceptive concreteness at first glance. The difficulty is that while the word is a noun it acts like an adjective. There is no specific material object that is wilderness. The term designates a quality (as the "-ness" suggests) that produces a certain mood or feeling in a given individual and, as a consequence, may be assigned by that person to a specific place. Because of this subjectivity a universally acceptable definition of wilderness is elusive. One man's wilderness may be another's roadside picnic ground.

Nash, Roderick - *Wilderness and the American Mind* p. 1

Roderick Nash argues in his *Wilderness and the American Mind*, the term "wilderness" is both familiar yet elusive, however, those of us who live in the urbanized centres of the world, frequently find a need to 'pin down' the exact nature of this term. Perhaps this is due in some measure to the need to identify a 'place' which has been 'untouched' by humans; a place where the collective power of *nature* has not yet succumbed to human will and intervention. It is in one sense (the Pioneer), an attempt to glorify all that we as humans have achieved, an exercise in self-congratulatory rhetoric that re-assures us of our position in the world. In another sense (the Romantic), it is a reflection of our desire to characterize a 'pure' aesthetic, the visual discourse of *nature* alone. Although both these views appear contrary to one another, in either sense they share a specific condition, a state which can only exist in the absence of humans. To understand how these views developed, one must examine the terms origin, and follow its path in the New World.

At a time when there was no alternative, existence in the wilderness was forbidding indeed. Safety, happiness, and progress all seemed dependent on rising out of a wilderness situation. It became essential to gain control over nature. Fire was one step; the domestication of some wild animals another. Gradually man learned how to control the land and raise crops. Clearings appeared in the forests. This reduction of the amount of wilderness defined man's achievement as he advanced toward civilization.

Nash, Roderick - *Wilderness and the American Mind* p. 9

This need to define the term wilderness is not new, and the term itself has been with us since biblical times when wilderness was seen as the antithesis of paradise, an inhospitable wasteland, which lay in wait for control, cultivation, and civilization. To some extent, immigrants were initially lured to America through a belief that a

place of paradise awaited their arrival, a place where food and fertile land were plentiful. Upon their arrival in the New World, their expectations, however, were met by the realization that they had arrived, not in paradise, but in wilderness. The 'pioneering' spirit and attitude quickly spread throughout America, and thus perpetuated the attitude toward wilderness, as a land in need of conquering. Thus it is clear how this first attitude toward wilderness developed, if civilization and all that it may bring is good, then the lack of it must therefore be bad. Furthermore, if we are as a society to gauge how we have progressed, it makes sense to view the wilderness as a constant, not in terms of its inability to change from day to day, but more specifically in terms of its inability to evolve.

The second view of wilderness (the Romantic), is a product of two developments of the eighteenth century: the term picturesque applied to the wilds for the first time; and the active association of nature and religion. Romanticism of the eighteenth century fostered new ideas about the concept of sublimity. Moreover, what was once considered repugnant, could be endowed with picturesque qualities. Such was the case with wilderness, when intellectuals began slowly to ascribe aesthetic qualities to wild domains. The groundwork for this radical shift in thought, was initially laid by Edmund Burke in his *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origins of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* 1757, and Immanuel Kant in *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime* 1763. Both Burke and Kant postulated that it was possible to assign aesthetically pleasing qualities to natural features, such as mountains, rivers, deserts etc. Furthering this, was the English aesthetician William Gilpin, who challenged the Classical notion of ordered, well proportioned beauty, by defining the "picturesque" as "the pleasing quality of nature's roughness, irregularity, and intricacy", in *Remarks on Forest Scenery and Other Woodland Views* 1792 (Nash, p. 46).

Similarly, the association of nature and religion began with scholarly investigation, as in Thomas Burnet's *The Sacred Theory of the Earth* 1684, and John Ray's *The Wisdom of God Manifested in the Works of Creation* 1691. Prior to this time there had always been associations with spirituality and natural features and forces, but never an active association with God and wilderness. Deism, with its belief in God reached through natural and scientific observation, not only allowed for this association, but initiated a radical change in the way the wilds were perceived.

Along with the sense of the sublime, deism helped lay the foundation for a striking intellectual about-face. By the mid-eighteenth century wilderness was associated with the beauty and godliness that previously had defined it by their absence. Men found it increasingly possible to praise, even to worship, what they had formerly detested.

Nash, Roderick *Wilderness and the American Mind* p.46

Primitivism, the belief in happiness and prosperity through a primitive (un-civilized) way of living, gained popularity as a result of the new found ways of looking at wilderness. This was particularly the case in America, where vast uncharted lands were the rule, rather than the exception. While the 'pioneering' attitude toward wilderness, was still by far and away the prevailing sentiment, Primitivism gained a strong following, and was growing in popularity among the urban and intellectual elite. For example a New Hampshire lawyer set off in the winter of 1818 on a four thousand mile journey to "...acquire the simplicity, native feelings, and virtues of savage life; to divest myself of the factitious habits, prejudices and imperfections of civilization...and to find amidst the solitude and grandeur of the western wilds, more correct views of human nature and of the true interest of man." He later wrote during his expedition "How sublime is the silence of nature's ever active energies! There is something in the very name of wilderness, which charms the ear, and soothes the spirit of man. There is religion in it." (Nash, p. 56 )

The Romantic view of wilderness gained further strength with America's independence from England, when the fledgling nation sought a uniquely defining characteristic which set it apart from other nations; if it could not match Europe in literature and art, it surely could in the sheer beauty and expansiveness of its wilderness.

Seizing on this distinction and adding to it deistic and Romantic assumptions about the value of wild country, nationalists argued that far from being a liability, wilderness was actually an American asset. Of course, pride continued to stem from the conquest of wild country, but by the middle decades of the nineteenth century wilderness was recognized as a cultural and moral resource and a basis for national self-esteem.

Nash, Roderick *Wilderness and the American Mind* p.67

Furthering the case of National pride were writers like Fenimore Cooper and artists like Thomas Cole, who in the early nineteenth century found in wilderness, a wealth of inspiration from which they drew, thereby creating a body of cultural work uniquely American in flavor. Thus, it is clear how the Romantic view of wilderness developed, and later prospered in the New World; through the endowment of aesthetic qualities, the association to God, the embracing of Primitivism, and national distinction.

The explicit focus of the sublime on virgin wilderness has created in the American character one of its true idiosyncrasies: the emotional connection of nationalism with stupendous scenery and the phenomenon of the preservation of wilderness areas.

Shepard, Paul *Man in the Landscape*, p.189

Consequently, the stage was set for a debate between the two alternate views of wilderness. The Pioneering, which saw wilderness as a state in need of human conquest, and the Romantic, which ascribed aesthetic qualities to the wilds. This debate became significant in the mid-nineteenth century, when for the first time the question arose - should wilderness areas be set aside for future generations to enjoy? The question itself was made possible through the change in attitude toward wilderness, but could not have been postulated based on simple notions of Romanticism alone. The wilderness needed a champion of intellectual prowess to cultivate a requirement for its continued existence; and found one in philosopher Henry David Thoreau.

Many of Thoreau's ideas on wilderness had been influenced by Transcendentalism; a belief in a parallel relationship between spiritual truth and material object. Although seemingly similar to the deists doctrine of God and nature, which initially lent credibility to the Romantic view, Transcendentalism was more complex in that the natural assumed importance *because* of its ability to *reflect* spiritual truth. "Unlike his Romantic contemporaries, Thoreau was not satisfied merely to announce his passion for wilderness. He wanted to understand its value" (Nash, p. 88). Additionally, Thoreau's attitude toward wilderness was shaped by his increasing disenchantment with the burgeoning economic prosperity and development of America. Thoreau, however, did not wholly discount the benefits of civilization, and after spending some time in the wilds of Maine, he argued for a balanced life,



including equal doses of wilderness and civilization. It was this position Thoreau assumed in the ensuing debates over the preservation of wilderness, and it was his concept which “led the intellectual revolution that was beginning to invest wilderness with attractive rather than repulsive qualities.”(Nash, p. 95)

Henry David Thoreau, with his refined philosophy of the importance of wilderness, made the classic early call for wilderness preservation...Thoreau defended wilderness as a reservoir of intellectual nourishment for civilized men.

Nash, Roderick *Wilderness and the American Mind* p.102

Thoreau’s efforts, eventually led to the establishment of the first wilderness preservation, designated on March 1 1872 as Yellowstone National Park. Thoreau, however, was not alone in his beliefs or in his efforts, and was joined by others who shared his views. Notably was man who would become the leading landscape architect of his time, Frederick Law Olmstead, whose name serves as an appropriate introduction to the next area of investigation.



Bierstadt, *Sunrise in the Hetch Hetchy Valley, California* -Shepard, p. 170



## *Landscape and the Land*

According to *The Oxford English dictionary* and *The Oxford dictionary of English etymology*, the word (landscape) has antecedents in terms such as the Old English (pre-twelfth century) *landscipe*, which meant region or tract...The common contemporary English usage derives from a Dutch term referring to a painting of inland natural scenery. The first English use in this sense - *landskip* - was noted in the sixteenth century. In the seventeenth century, Milton wrote of *lantskip*, referring to a view of the scenery itself rather than to a painting of scenery.

Bourassa, Steven C. - *The Aesthetics of Landscape*, p. 2

Landscape, as in the scenic sense of Milton's *lantskip*, and the painterly sense of the Dutch term *landskip*, is for the most part how we today conceive of the term. It can be thought of as a view to which one ascribes aesthetic qualities, or the representation of that view. An alternate view of landscape, however, developed with the evolution of land tenure, from feudal to capitalist modes. In *Social formation and symbolic landscape*, Cosgrove demonstrates that it was not until one was able to distance oneself from the land, that one was able to view the land as landscape. Landscape, therefore, is not only a pictorial construction of the land, it is a social construction which severed one's immediate relationship to the land, and repositioned him/her as a *voyeur*.

The term landscape originally applied only to cultivated land; the rural farmland, pastures and orchards, which were signs of productivity and prosperity, and early landscape painting reflected this as in Bellini's *St. Francis in Ecstasy* c.1485. As landscape painting developed, so did the concept of landscape, particularly in the seventeenth century which proved to be a significant transitional period. New methods of representation led to prescribed formulas for depicting landscapes, which eventually led to the eighteenth century idea of the 'picturesque'. These methods included formulas for depicting everything found in the landscape, from leaves, to cows, to mountains, to castles, and rendered the scene in a three plane composition of muted colour. An early example of this type of landscape is Lorraine's *A Pastoral Landscape* c. 1650. Once established as the primary mode of representation, people became educated as to what to look for in scenery, and actively sought new landscapes to deem picturesque.

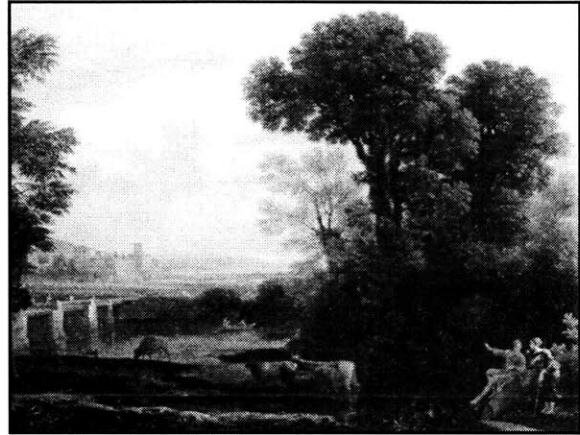
In the course of the seventeenth century, landscape painting came into its own,

simultaneously with the art of travel...Having learned the clues to scenery from from looking at pictures, they (Gentlemen of the seventeenth century) were prepared to look for the picturesque wherever they found it.

Shepard, Paul *Man In The Landscape*, p.124



Bellini, *St. Francis in Ecstasy* -Janson, p. 481



Lorraine, *A Pastoral Landscape* -Janson, p. 591

The use of the term landscape to describe wilderness or wild areas, did not occur until the eighteenth century when the Romantic view of wilderness was first accepted. One could argue that it was landscape painters choosing wilderness as their subject, that permitted the acceptance of the Romantic view of the wilderness. One of the first painters to do this was Salvatore Rosa, who created a pictorial romance of wilderness thereby enabling “collectors, gentlemen and enthusiasts”, to “convey to themselves the conviction that there was a sublime order in the most savage scenery” (Shepard, p. 165).

The Romantic view of wilderness, which began in the eighteenth century with the notion of the picturesque, made it possible to not only ascribe aesthetic qualities to the wilderness, but led to the profession of landscape architecture, pioneered by Frederick Law Olmsted. Once confident that there was beauty in areas untouched by ‘man’, it was then possible to try to imitate the best aspects of these areas, in the design and construction of gardens and parks.

Olmsted gave to romantic aesthetic theory the ultimate service. If the ideal of the artist is to create a work of art that reflects the generative vitality of an organic world, if the work of art is a microcosmic recreation of the organic world, then Olmsted achieved the romantic ideal in the artistry of his landscape designs... Olmsted's landscape designs were composed as natural scenes that impart a

pictorial effect...His parks were manifestations of physical nature yet ideal expressions of nature; they were analogous to nature yet homologous with it.

Fisher, Irving D. *Frederick Law Olmsted and the City Planning Movement in the United States*, p. 64

Olmsted was not content with the simple representation of nature, for “nature, unassisted, often presents a landscape that is unappealing, composed of weak, deformed, barren elements.”(Fisher, p. 63) Olmsted felt his work to be the result of a collaborative effort between artist and nature, which produces a “poetic charm, no less natural than the original scenery” (Fisher, p. 63). In this collaboration nature provides the raw materials and inspiration, and the artist contributes imagination and structure through the application of rational principles. This perspective is deeply rooted in the contemporary notion and understanding of landscape, and forms the basis of the aforementioned pictorial and social construction of the land.

Landscape, as in the pictorial construction of the land, although familiar is, however, problematic in that it presupposes a structured way of seeing things based upon linear perspective (a method of representation where sizes, distances and relative locations appear to correspond to actual ones). It can be reduced to a series of visual signifiers which make it possible to ‘recognize’ and appreciate ‘natural beauty’ which introduces “whether we want it or not, notions of value and form” (Barrell, p. 1). It is not the simple representation of the land or looking at a particular scene, it is the *framing* of a particular view of the land, which purposefully excludes to reinforce these notions of value.

...the sixteenth century invention of *landskip*, ostensibly sympathetic to nature, was in fact the mask behind which Francis Bacon’s and Rene Descartes’s agenda for the domination of nature coopted a rising sentiment. Linear perspective, that reflex within which our modern delineation arises, was not a loving means of verification, but of distancing, detaching, and disintegrating - the means of stepping out of the picture.

Shepard, Paul *Man In The Landscape*, p.xxv

Landscape, as in the social construction of the land, is the direct result of not only one’s ability to perceive the land and its scenic qualities from an ‘outsiders’ point of view (*voyeur*), but to possess the wealth associated with its cultivation. Thus the commodification of the land can be seen in two distinct ways. The first places cer-

tain values on the land based upon its *framed* aesthetic qualities (related to pictorial construction). The second ties the value of the land to its productive capabilities.

The beauty of farmland is seldom felt by the farmer, or if felt, seldom articulated. Farmland is admired not by those who work it, but by those who live in the city and travel through the countryside...Any intelligent observer new that agriculture was the economic foundation of society. The French Physiocrats held that agriculture was the only creative work and farms the only real wealth.

Shepard, Paul *Man In The Landscape*, p.131

This concept of landscape thus has ideological connections with capitalist attitudes toward land, which has “relegated land to just another factor of production or form of capital” (Bourassa, p. 4). Whether it is in the form of produce derived directly from the cultivated soil of farmland, or in the form of postcards and travel brochures depicting majestic views of wilderness, the meaning of landscape is inevitably tied to those who profit from it.



Franklin Park 1997 - David B. Smith

## *Gardens and Gardening*

The word *garden* has both a general (the Garden of Eden as a metaphor for the supposed site of lost innocence) and a particular ('fenced and cultivated') meaning. The minimum condition of the garden is its enclosure (Walpole's claim that William Kent 'leaped the fence and saw all nature as a garden' still confirms the fence as an integral feature of the garden). Erp-Houtepan argues that *garden* originates from the same Old English root as *geard* or 'fence'.

Pugh, Simon *Garden-nature-language*, p. 135

Thacker argues in *The History of Gardens*, that the first gardens were not 'man made but discovered' natural occurrences. They would take the form of clearings in the forest, pastoral meadows, mountain valleys etc., filled with the pleasant qualities of nature (flowers, fruit, birds etc.) This view is linked to the biblical origins of garden as the place created by God, where life would flourish and Adam and Eve could live in harmony with nature. In this sense the meaning of garden is more than Pugh's 'metaphoric meaning' of 'lost innocence', it is a metaphor for an idealized view of nature and in turn an idyllic view of life.

Historically, garden as a metaphor for idealized nature, has found its way in one form or another into nearly all types of gardens, from the Persian gardens of the sixth century B.C., to the English gardens of the twentieth century; they are all to a greater or lesser degree physical manifestations of this view. The exception to this is perhaps the Japanese Zen garden, where the garden was not so much an idealized version of nature, but a particular representation of it; this I will detail later. Thus Pugh's 'particular meaning' of garden as a defined space for cultivation, in conjunction with the metaphorical meaning of garden, forms the basis from which an infinite variety of gardens have been developed over the course of history. For purposes of brevity, I will examine three types of gardens and their salient features, in an attempt to not only illustrate their diversity, but to broaden the understanding of what constitutes a garden, and how this is tied to notions of landscape and wilderness.

A garden might be seen as a minor, merely local, and cosmetic experience of nature that could be more authentically sought in wild and remote places. Yet gardens, comments Michael Pollan, with their "middle ground between the wilderness and the lawn...help us out in all those situations where the wilderness ethic is silent or unhelpful," or where the experience of wilderness is unaffordable and inaccessible.

Hynes, H. Patricia A Patch of Eden, p. ix

## The Twelfth Century Medieval Garden

During the twelfth century as people began to emerge from the dark ages, there was an increasing interest in the study of the natural world, and there grew a common appreciation for the outdoors. This interest was manifested in the gardens of the period, through the Christian thought of paradise as the combination of heaven and nature. The literature of this time describes the ideal garden as the Biblical paradise, where “flowers and fruit grow year round, useful spices and herbs grow abundantly, and all pleasing birds sing” (Thacker, p.89); it is from this ideal that the gardens of this period were fashioned through the architecture of the church.

The shape of the medieval garden comes from the square or rectangular shape of the cloister. In religious houses a walled garden had of course a special Christian symbolism, for it was the virgin bride of Solomon’s *Song of Songs*, and by implication the Virgin Mary.

Thacker, Christopher *The History of Gardens*, p. 83

The Medieval garden of the twelfth century was enclosed, symbolic, and aestheticized, and took its form from religious conviction. Gardens became the symbol of the Virgin Mary and fertility, and it was common to have four rivers come to a central pool or fountain which symbolized Christian purity. Within the walls of the garden, “lattice and trellis were used to subdivide the space, and canals of standing water irrigated and nourished the beds” (Hyams, p. 91). These beds were either square or rectangular and raised, and planting consisted of flowers, grass, and herbs for medicinal use. This geometric plan of the garden, “formed the basis of all subsequent formal gardens in Europe” (Thacker p. 84).



Medieval Garden - Thacker, p. 83



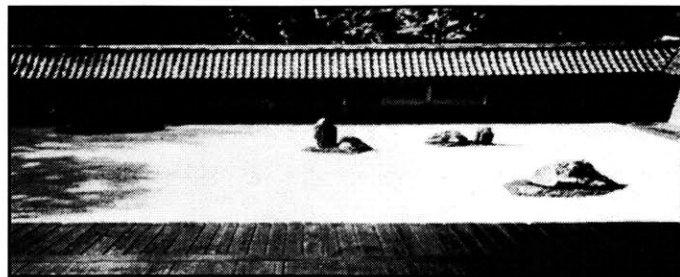
## The *Kare Sansui* Zen Garden

The temple garden in the Ryoanji monastery in Kyoto Japan, was designed in the 1480's and is perhaps one of the best examples of the *kare sansui* gardens (a dry abstract garden, with no plants, flowers or trees). The thirty by seventy foot garden is rectangular in shape, and is enclosed by two temple buildings and two walls. Its surface is uniform and level, and is comprised of small white pebbles raked evenly in a lengthwise direction. There are fifteen stones which are arranged in five groups throughout the garden, and around the stones grow small patches of moss.

This garden is, above all others in Japan, a garden for contemplation. No one walks on the gravel expanse, except, occasionally, the trained gardener with his rake. We do not even saunter round the garden, but stop to meditate. A sixteenth century Zen priest called Tessen Soki wrote a garden book *Ka Senzui No Fu*, in which he speaks of 'reducing thirty thousand miles to the distance of a single foot'.

Thacker, Christopher *The History of Gardens*, p. 72

The Ryoanji garden, was a place for both contemplation, and for the enjoyment of nature through the art of suggestion. The abstract repetition of natural forms was meant to trigger thought and meditation, and every detail was designed to have another meaning, a second interpretation beyond the literal. The placement of each element was extremely important in the overall design which relied on simplicity and suggestion, thus leaving room for imagination. "They are, at one and the same time, rocks and the universe...They are what they are, and through their own nature, they suggest le tout" (Thacker, p. 71). The gardens were in one sense representations of landscapes (mountains, waterfalls, etc.), through the image and placement of rocks and sand. They became quite literally, a place to withdraw from the material world, and their walled privacy allowed for quiet contemplation to discover truth and gain insight. "The form has been reduced to its ultimate limits, and so, in our contemplation of it, our thought may then expand infinitely outwards." (Thacker, p. 71)



Ryoanji Temple Garden - Thacker, p. 71

## The Seventeenth Century Formal European Garden

The formal gardens of the seventeenth century are perhaps the finest examples of garden design which illustrate symmetry, proportion, intricate patterns and details, in an attempt to bring unity and order to nature. The sensation of control in these gardens could be found everywhere, from the compartments of box plantings, to the geometrical pruning of trees and shrubbery, to the elaborate use of water; all a symbolic gesture of power.

The garden is an area where nature, elsewhere unruly and irregular, has been tamed, and made to follow the dictates of the owner. The irregular growths of bushes and trees have been trained into geometrical and symmetrical shapes, either as hedges, clipped into green but clearly architectural forms, or as elements of *broderie*, straight or curving lines of box, punctuated by cones and clipped yew; and the fountains in the formal pools obediently squirt and spout their jets in balanced and symmetrical patterns.

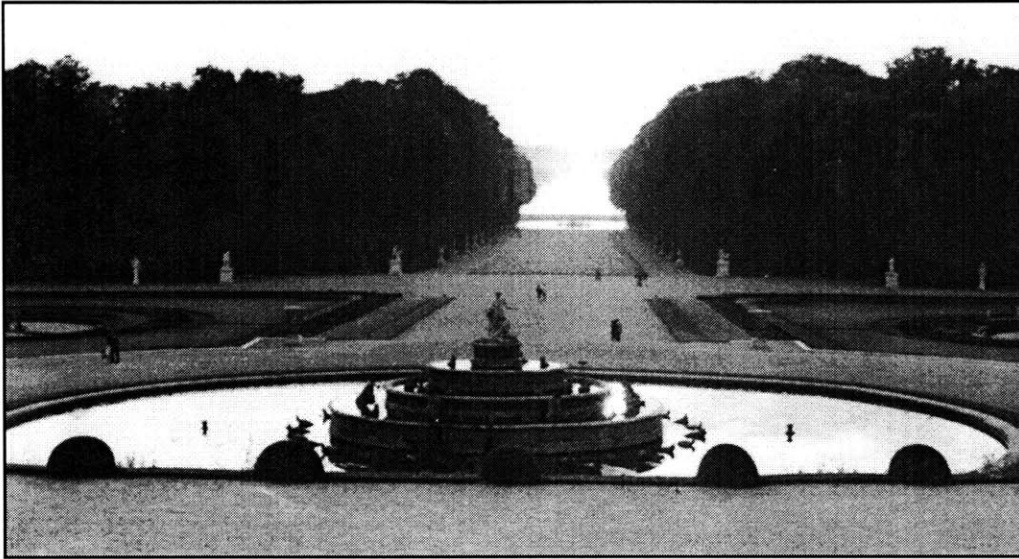
Thacker, Christopher *The History of Gardens*, p. 143

The epitome of the French formal garden is Versailles, built for King Louis XIV beginning in 1661. Louis XIV wanted to control how his visitors experienced his garden, and created *La Maniere de Montrer les Jardins de Versailles*, a tour itinerary which instructed viewers on what to do, which routes to follow, and what to view in a specific order. "To follow this itinerary one would walk from one fountain to the next without ever losing sight of water." (Thacker p. 153) Water played an important role in Versailles, and was used effectively in illustrating this notion of control and power, through its fountains, pools, and channels. For example, the *Water Theatre* (destroyed in 1770) made use of a multiplicity of balanced, symmetrical water jets of varying sizes; these 'played' in various combinations and were made to 'perform' for the king (Thacker p. 153). Control of water extended beyond the garden when a machine was completed in the 1680's to pump water from the *Seine* river to an aqueduct which supplied Versailles with its water.

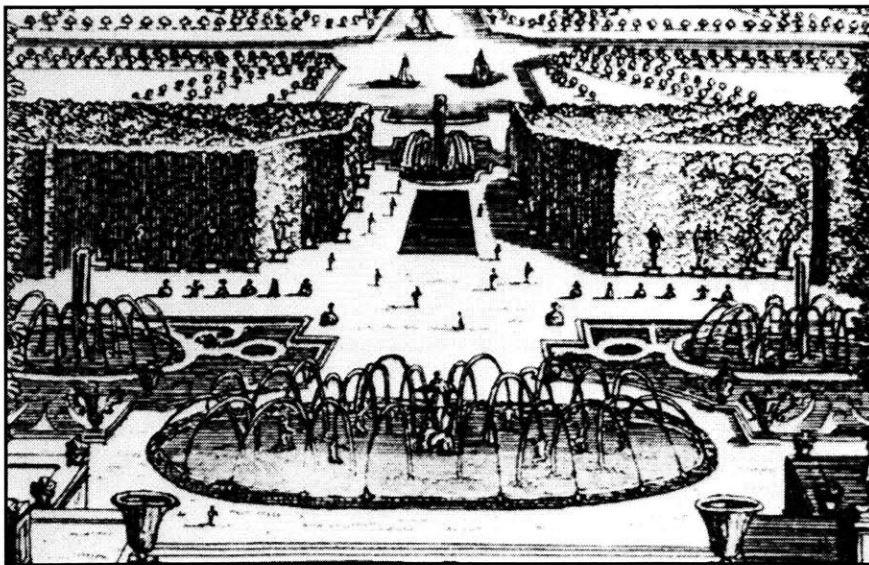
Versailles can be seen as a gesture of arrogance, with the view that the natural world was lacking in beauty, proportion, and harmony, so 'man' must bring nature under control and to its full aesthetic potential. This view of the relationship between 'man' and nature was common in the seventeenth century, and is evident in notions of what constituted landscape, and the attitudes toward wilderness and wild places at the time.

To Louis, as to most of his contemporaries, whether in France or elsewhere in Europe, the natural world of trees, stones and water, forests, hills, and the sea, was not in itself beautiful or admirable, but lacking in beauty, proportion and harmony until man had brought it under control, and imposed on it his man-centered order, balance and symmetry.

Thacker, Christopher *The History of Gardens*, p. 153



Versailles, The Grand Vista with Fountain of Latona - Hyams, p. 161



Engraving of the Principle Vista at Versailles c.1733 - Thacker, p. 148



## *Community Gardens*

The Community Gardens of today arguably have their roots in eighteenth century England, where two separate movements led to the establishment of a national policy for the municipal provision of land for community gardening. These movements are characterized by Sam Bass Warner as “philanthropy” and “self-help”. The first, was the leasing of small parcels of land to farm labourers for community gardens by wealthy landowners. The second was the renting of lands on the fringes of cities by artisans to grow vegetables and flowers. These two movements came together at the turn of the century, when Parliament passed a law which called upon local governments to establish “allotment gardens”, for those who could not afford their own land (Warner, p. 8).

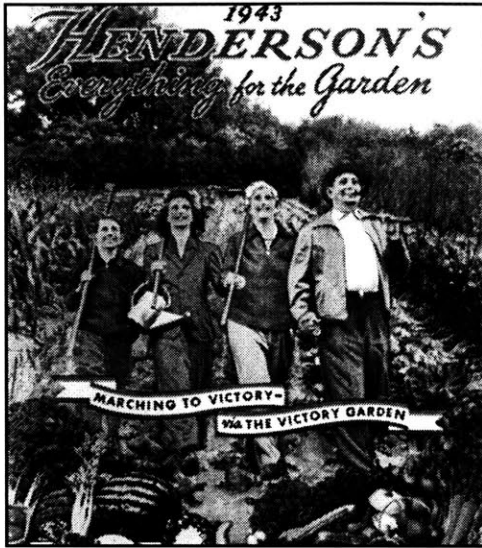
In the United States, the origins of these gardens find can be found in the “charity gardens” established during the 1893-1897 depression, and in the “victory gardens” established during the First and Second World Wars. During the economic depression of 1893-1897, the City of Detroit plowed four hundred and fifty-five acres of land and provided seeds and plots for nine hundred and forty-five families. Once harvested, “the produce not only helped to feed these families, but saved the city nine thousand dollars in food welfare purchases” (Hynes, p. x). This type of “charity” garden, was fashioned in a number of cities over the next ten years, but in every case was ultimately abandoned; due to mounting pressures of building, urbanization, and a sentiment among voters and politicians that city land should be for parks, and not for growing vegetables.

The idea of a city that would provide open spaces to those who wished to garden was a concept quite beyond the American imagination. A poor man might enjoy a walk in the new parks which were being laid out in the cities across the nation... but voters, politicians, and philanthropists all agreed that it would be wrong for a poor father or mother to have some claim on a small plot of city land for raising vegetables.

Warner, Sam Bass *To Dwell is to Garden*, p. 16

The victory gardens began as a result of food shortages caused by the realities of the war (submarine blockades, and the destruction of crops and farmland overseas to name just a few). Beginning in 1917, patriotic slogans filled billboards calling out to those who were not fighting, to grow vegetables to help fight the national cause. Some of these slogans were, “Every garden is a munition plant” and “Sow

the Seeds of Victory” (Warner, p. 19). With the coming of World War II, the victory gardens of the First World War were resurrected, and cities and industry loaned land for the purposes of gardening. At the end of the war, the land was returned and the victory gardens ceased to exist, except for the *Fenway Victory Garden* in Boston, which functions today as a community garden.



Catalogue Cover, Huff, p.33



Mabel - The Fenway Victory Garden, Warner, p. 54

Community gardens of today for the most part, can be seen as quite distinct from their predecessors, although they share many of the same features, and reasons for establishment. Moreover, there is a wide range of diversity amongst these gardens, making a concrete definition of community gardens somewhat elusive. Rather than going into a detailed analysis of a number of different gardens, I will identify and examine three criterion which form the basis of contemporary community gardening. These criterion should in no way be thought of as independent of each other, and more often than not it is their collective presence which help formulate most community gardens today. They are the *practical*, the *social*, and the *aesthetic*.

The *practical* is, put quite simply, the economic need or desire to grow and harvest one's own food, and it is from this position that many people come to community gardening, and view it as a viable alternative to purchasing vegetables and fruits in a market. In the Boston Urban Gardeners' *A Handbook of Community Gardening*, Judith Wagner argues that most people participate in community gardens because of savings in food costs. While this may indeed be the reason, its implications are

responsible for many of the rules and regulations governing community gardens, and their physical properties. For example, the dimensions and shape of most community garden plots maximize the productive capabilities of all available land (raised rectangular beds, set side by side, with no open spaces). Furthermore, a typical application for a plot in a garden, will ask the prospective gardener how many people will be fed from his/her plot, and will state guidelines such as “Remove all plants when they have ceased to bear” (*A Handbook of Community Gardening*, p. 25). Some gardens institute a type of communal gardening, where each gardener is required to “specialize” in one specific crop, and later share the harvest with his/her fellow gardeners (*A Handbook of Community Gardening*, p. 57). Whatever the reason one comes to be a community gardener, the *practical* or economic is the driving force behind the physical characteristics of most community gardens.



*A Boston Community Garden, Naimark, p. 96*

The *social* can be defined as the complex relationship between gardener, garden, and community. It is often the by-product of the *practical*, in that through a desire to garden one builds new relationships and ties to his/her community. At other times it is in itself an interest in meeting new people or becoming involved in a social activity. Diana Balmori describes this as a “weaving” of people into a neighbourhood, “enabling them to combat some aspects of urban anomie”, which allows for the creation of a “small, familiar, comprehensible, and livable community within the urban metropolis” (Balmori, p. 15). Unlike the *practical*, the *social* does not

provide any immediate economic rewards, it does, however, lead to “stable” neighbourhoods, of which the long term financial benefits are immeasurable.

For them (Boston Urban Gardeners) the community gardens not only provide food but through their politics they help people to organize they help people to organize food cooperatives, farmers’ markets, local health facilities, and neighborhood social and educational activities. The garden movement for this group is a program for social reconstruction, a way to increase the power and efficiency of neighborhood self-help activities so that fewer American families will live stranded and helpless within the commercial metropolis.

Warner, Sam Bass *To Dwell is to Garden*, p. 39

The *aesthetic* can be described as the public gentrification of an urban area, by the reclamation of abandoned land through the establishment of a community garden. H. Patricia Hynes describes this as “cleaning up overgrown neighborhood eyesores and pushing out drug dealing that, like weeds, overtakes neglected vacant lots...” (Hynes, p. x). This “cleansing” of impoverished urban areas, is extolled by many as one of the primary benefits of community gardens, and see community gardening as an alternative to “trash filled lots”, and a means of preventing “resident displacement by public redevelopment and private gentrification.” (Warner p. 39). The net results of the *aesthetic* are: cleaner neighbourhoods, increased outdoor activities by residents, and healthier communities through the ecology of the garden.



*Six and B Garden - New York*, Huff, p. 11



## *Artists' Work*

In order to contextualize the role I have chosen to play as an artist in the Dungarven Road garden, it is necessary to examine the work of other artists, and illustrate how they have chosen to work in the land. There are many different types of practices associated with this genre of work, and they are commonly referred to as 'land art', 'earth art', and 'environmental art' to name a few. Because of the enormity of this subject, I will not go into a detailed history of these types of practices, nor will I attempt to identify all of the artists associated with each. I will, however, examine three specific works by three artists, thereby illustrating a variety approaches which have been taken in the past, and in so doing, situate myself within contemporary art making practices. These works are: *Time Landscape: Greenwich Village* by Alan Sonfist, *Little Sparta* by Ian Hamilton Finlay, and *Breathing Space for the Sava River* by Newton Harrison and Helen Mayer Harrison. I have chosen these specific works because they address some of the topics I have raised earlier in this paper (wilderness, landscape, garden).

Alan Sonfist created *Time Landscape: Greenwich Village* on what were the remains of a tenement building at the corner of LaGuardia Place and Houston Street, in New York's Greenwich Village. What began as a concept in 1965 for a series of *Time Landscapes* throughout urban centres of the world, finally came to fruition in 1978. After the clearing of the rubbish, and remains of the former building from the nine thousand square foot lot, Sonfist involved members of the community and began to restore the site to its 'natural' form. This included restoring the soil, re-establishing the original elevations, re-introducing rock samples, and planting "three stages of plant succession to re-create a historically accurate native woodlands." (Lacy, p. 280) These stages began on the southern end of the site with wild grasses, and continued to the centre with saplings of oak and hickory, and concluded with mature trees on the north end.

*Time Landscape: Greenwich Village*, should not be characterized as the mere reclamation and beautification of an urban site, nor as a simple creation of a romantic form of 'nature' (wilderness) within the confines of a city. *Time* refers not only to a time when this landscape would have existed on the site, but more importantly to the cycle of time within the work itself. Sonfist has created a monument com-

memorating “nature’s cycles of growth and decay”, which “focus on the process of nature rebuilding itself”, rather than an “idealized ecological model of a forest” (Matilsky, p. 70). This cycle of time which began in 1978, will continue indefinitely in this ‘permanent’ work, which is being maintained by the city’s public parks system.



*Time Landscape- Sonfist, p. 33*

*Little Sparta*, by Ian Hamilton Finlay is best characterized as the sum of a series of works completed at different stages over the last 30 years. In 1966 Ian and Sue Finlay settled at *Stonypath*, “an abandoned hillside croft” in the Southern Uplands of Scotland (Abrioux, p. 4). When they arrived, *Stonypath* was a “desolate spot”, with sparse vegetation, no ponds, and only one tree. During the coming years Finlay would create a “garden” over four acres of land, build a number of agricultural buildings, and turn one of the buildings into *Garden Temple*, a gallery showing the work of Finlay and his collaborators. Finlay’s work does not reside solely in *Garden Temple*, it can be found throughout the site, both in the form of sculptural elements, and in the transformation of the land itself.

*Stonypath* (renamed *Little Sparta* in 1978), is a complex weaving of neoclassical

references with contemporary social themes, where “allusion is made repeatedly to the artist’s pantheon of intellectual imagery”(Cox, p. 104). Finlay follows the tradition of poet-gardeners such as Pope or Shenstone, who are viewed as “social thinkers distilling ethical values from the transformation of their landscape.” (Abrioux, p. 4) Throughout *Little Sparta*, one finds an incredibly diverse amount of elements, ranging from text carved in marble as in *See POUSSIN Hear LORRAIN*, to the stone *Aircraft carrier Bird-Table*, to a living tortoise who roams the garden with the words *Panzer Leader* painted on his shell. These element are set in a landscape constructed of dense growths, pools and ponds, and “simplified varieties of plantings” which are “matched by the precise symmetry and proportion of the garden elements.”(Cox, p. 104) Finlay’s *Little Sparta* may be looked upon as a “model of society, in which each aspect of cultural activity, like each botanical specimen, has been granted its appropriate place.” (Abrioux, p. 39)

*From ‘Unconnected Sentences on Gardening’*

A garden is not an object but a process.

*Installing* is the hard toil of garden making,  
*placing* is its pleasure.

Superior gardens are composed of Glooms  
and Solitudes and not of plants and trees.

A liberal’s compost heap is his castle.

Garden centres must become the Jacobin  
Clubs of the new Revolution.

Solitude in gardens is an aspect of *scale*.

Certain gardens are described as retreats  
when they are really attacks.

Trees are preserved by manners, not by  
economy wrappers.

Ecology is Nature-Philosophy *secularised*.

The murmur of innumerable bills was known  
to most great gardeners.

*Ian Hamilton Finlay* - Abrioux, p. 40



*See POUSSIN Hear LORRAIN* - Abrioux, p. 50



*Panzer Leader* - Abrioux, p. 3

Since 1977 Newton Harrison and Helen Mayer Harrison have studied various aspects of watersheds, and through collaborations with biologists, engineers, landscape artists, and environmentalists, they have developed a unique artistic practice. Typically their work begins with research on a specific site, ranging from “sociological studies to aerial photography.”(Stiles, p. 508) This is followed by interviews with the local inhabitants, area ecologists, biologists, and planners, all of which is used by the Harrisons to develop a solution to an environmental problem. The artists then create a “photographic narrative that identifies the problem, questions the system of beliefs that allowed the condition to develop, and proposes initiatives to counter environmental damage.”(Matilsky, p. 58) The work is subsequently displayed in public places such as museums and libraries, which allows for a public discourse to develop. At times the work is conveyed through a “poetic narration, or dialogue” between the artists in the form of a performance, where the artists see themselves as “storytellers”, whose “art is about direct engagement.” (Matilsky, p. 58)

The work of Newton Harrison and Helen Mayer Harrison has always in some way been related to water, and *Breathing Space for the Sava River* is no exception. In 1988 the Harrisons surveyed the Sava river flood plain in the former Yugoslavia, and photographed the course of the river from its sources, to where it empties into the Danube River. The river is pristine at its beginning and rich in wildlife, however, during its course it is polluted by the waste from many factories, and is confined in part by dams and canals for irrigation and flood control. After this initial survey, “they used photographs and poetic texts to illustrate the collision between man and nature along the river”.(Matilsky, p. 59) The Harrisons then proposed a series of initiatives that would “create a corridor of unpolluted land along its entire length”(Lacy. p. 233), and restore the ecological balance to the area. These initiatives included: establishing swamps along drainage ditches; developing a root-zone purification system eliminating many pollutants through plant selection; organic farming to reduce fertilizer runoff; and recycling of water from a nuclear power plant, which could be used in holding ponds to raise fish.

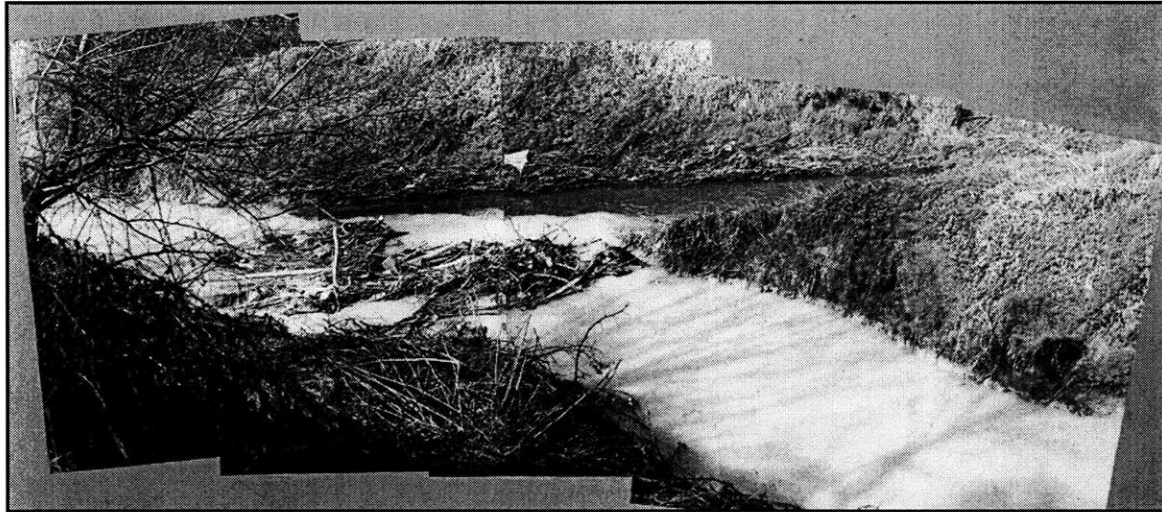
Not long after *Breathing Space for the Sava River* was exhibited in Germany and Yugoslavia, the Croatian Department of the Environment approved the plans and the World Bank expressed interest in funding the river cleanup. In this way their work became a catalyst for public awareness and concerted action.

Matilsky, Barbara *Fragile Ecologies*, p. 59

Although *Breathing Space for the Sava River* was never realized in its physicality due to the 1991 civil war in that area, it nevertheless serves as an important work; increasing public awareness of an ecological problem, and expanding the role of the artist in environmental art.



*Sava River* Schauer, p. 23



*Sava River* Schauer, p. 27

Yet we know from having been there that a new story  
a new history  
is being written for this river  
A paper mill is a new history  
A coal mine and black water is the new history  
An atomic energy plant and heated water is the new history  
A fertilizer factory and acid water is the new history  
Subtracting the floodplain and farming to the edge  
is the new history

I said  
the reshaping of the river is the new history

Newton and Helen Mayer Harrison - Schauer, p. 27

In conclusion, I have chosen these artists and their work not only because I feel they represent vastly different approaches to working in the land, but more importantly because my work may be situated somewhere between all of their practices. Sonfist's work is not simply a desire to introduce the Romantic Wilderness to an urban site, it may be characterized as "the uncovering of the natural past through a visual archaeology." (Sonfist, p.3) It is through this visual archaeology that he creates an awareness of the natural systems and cycles of time in the environment. Finlay's work is a coalescence of poetic, sculptural, architectural, and conceptual themes and forms. His garden may be seen as a type of social landscape, in which he uses neoclassical imagery to disseminate ethical values which address contemporary society. The Harrisons' work is a multi-layered "ecological art, that is conceptual, sculptural, site-specific and interactive."(Lacy p. 231) It addresses the relationship of humans to their environment, and in the process reveals the detrimental aspects of that relationship. Moreover, through their collaborations with a variety of people, they propose tangible ways of repairing that relationship in a specific site. The work I propose for the Dungarven Rd. site, will address some of the issues and themes associated with these artists' work, and will extend contemporary notions of how artists work in the land.



Site Photo August 1997 - David B. Smith

## *Project Overview*

### *Establishing the Role of the Artist in the Dungarven Rd. Garden*

An aesthetic interest in environment means more than neighborhood cleanup campaigns. It involves more than appreciating gardens, parks, or urban vistas...Important as all of these are, they are still restricted by a limited focus. For the aesthetic is crucial in our very perception of environment. It entails the form and quality of human experience in general. The environment can be seen as the condition of all such experience, where the aesthetic becomes the qualitative center of our daily lives.

Berleant, Arnold *The Aesthetics of Environment*, p. 57

Establishing the role I would play as an artist in the Dungarven Rd. neighbourhood garden, began with an assessment of my aesthetic interest in the site. This interest was formed from three distinct, yet related perspectives: artist, gardener, and area resident. As an artist, I hoped to introduce a work to the site which could function as a community resource, contributing to the overall experience of those who frequent it. As a gardener, I wanted to help ameliorate the physical conditions of gardening, thereby encouraging new gardeners to come to the site. As an area resident, I wished to see the overall character of the neighbourhood maintained, and I viewed the preservation of the site in its present form as a means to that end. It is all of these perspectives collectively, which constitute my personal aesthetic interest in the site, and it is from all of this, that I have developed my work.

The work itself arose out of an awareness of a particular problem which exists in the garden; the lack of a reliable source of water. Rainfall alone does not satisfy the needs of the various types of plants, and residents must carry their water in buckets from their homes to the site. Throughout the course of the summer, particularly during the hot days of July and August, it is sometimes necessary to water one's plot ever second day. On the surface this may not appear to be a great task, however, a plot of just six by eight feet requires 40 gallons of water per week. At eight pounds per gallon, that amounts to 320 pounds of water one must carry from his or her home to the garden each week, during times of little or no rainfall. This becomes an extremely laborious task, and some plots do not make it beyond August, as their keepers find they do not have the time or energy to invest in the watering of their plants.

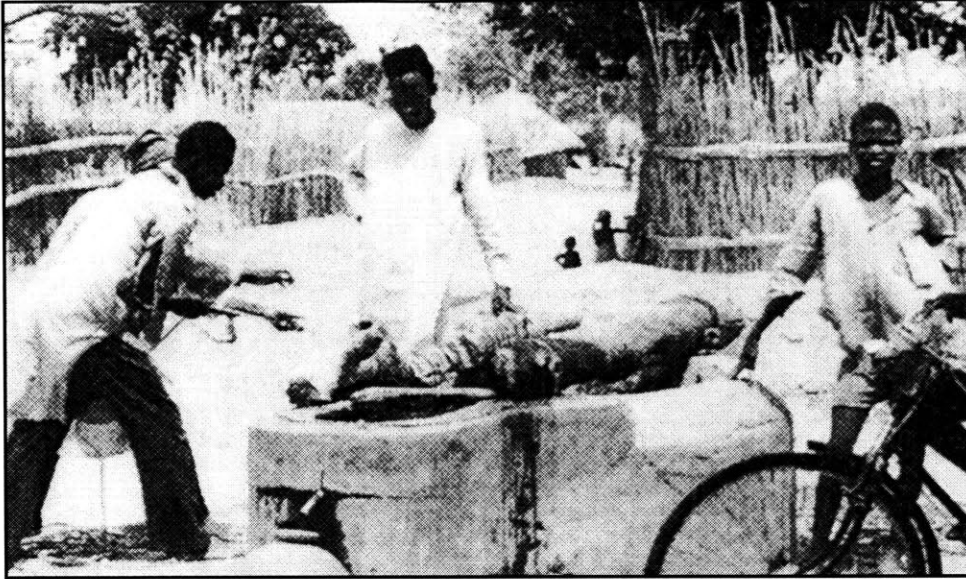
The work I propose for the Dungarven Rd. neighbourhood garden stems from this initial assessment of a problem I perceived as a gardener, and its realization would not only address this problem, but fulfill my personal aesthetic interest in the site. Put simply, I propose to introduce a reliable source of water to the garden. My interests as a gardener would be satisfied, as this would eliminate the gardeners' burden of bringing water to the site. Additionally, my interests as an area resident would be met, as this would encourage continued participation in the gardens, thereby maintaining the character of the site. Finally, my interests as an artist would be served, through the creation of a neighbourhood resource, contributing to the overall experience of those who come to the site.

The question which remains is how is this to be done? Moreover, what distinguishes my work from that of an engineer, landscape architect, or any other gardener who similarly wishes to introduce water to the garden? To help address these questions, an examination of water as a resource and as an element of design, would be helpful in setting a framework for my particular proposal.

### *Water in the Land*

Historically, water has always been one of, if not the most, essential resource to consider in human settlement of the land. From this perspective water is purely functional, and one must consider it in very practical ways: Where can it be gathered? How can it be gathered? How much of it is needed? How can it be conserved? Techniques, developed throughout the course of history, answered these questions similarly through very practical methods. Yet within these methods, there emerged complex social rituals, all of which centered around water. There is a rich history associated with the communal water well, functioning as a social gathering space by consequence. Water, a required commodity, was often gathered in a processional fashion, leaving one's home with buckets empty and embarking on a journey to the well. Once there, people would meet others who had come to not only collect water, but socialize and exchange information, eventually returning home with their buckets full. The communal well served not only as the source of water, but it proved to be a means of developing relationships and acquiring information, all of which constitute, an essential resource.





*Hand Dug Well in Nigeria* Watt, p.134

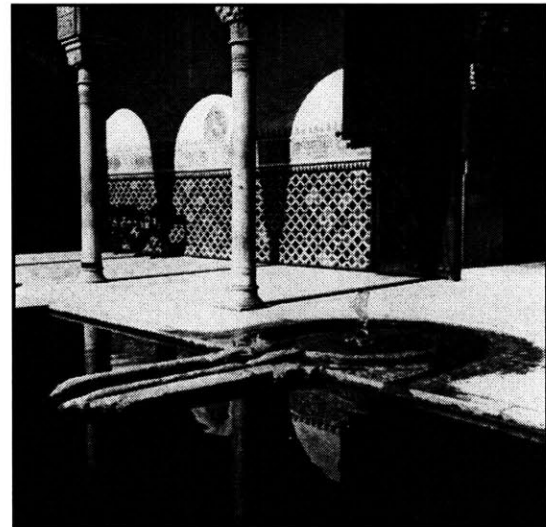
Similarly, within these practical methods, there developed a complexity which went beyond the utilitarian in the physical manipulation of water, and the qualities of this resource were exposed in a variety of ways. The physical, visual, and auditory properties of water were all used to create pleasing environments in cities and gardens, through the use of fountains, pools, waterfalls, etc. All of this occurred while fulfilling its primary function as that of a life giving essential resource. For example, “Ancient Rome was adorned with 1,212 public fountains...which was a direct result of the aqueduct system, which brought incredible quantities of water into the city from springs and mountain streams” to serve the water requirements of the city (Campbell, 16). Water became an element of design, and through its inherent properties, an aesthetic discourse developed.

This manipulation and design is particularly evident in the gardens of ancient Persia, Moorish Spain, and North Africa. In Islamic cultures “water was a central feature of garden design, with religious symbolism; it defined space and interpenetrated from the open court into the enclosure. The Islamic view of Heaven, or Paradise, is a beautiful garden, and the Day of Judgement will take place in gardens of pleasure complete with cooling springs and fountains” (Campbell, 18). Water was an essential element in the traditional Islamic garden design, for purposes of irrigation, architectural composition, display, and sound. Perhaps the best example of this is the *Alhambra* on Sibika Hill in Granada, Spain. Water is brought to this

“fortress-palace” from the River Daro, “through a system of reservoirs, cisterns, aqueducts, and pipes to a large storage tank within the walls of the Alhambra itself.”(Campbell, 21) Once inside, all of the physical properties of water are used to their full potential, in creating a truly meditative environment. In the *Court of Lions*, water bubbles up through bronze heads into circular basins, and flows from four directions in exposed channels to the centre, as in the traditional Islamic garden. In other areas water flows into large reflecting pools, and fountains fill the air with moisture, providing relief from the hot climate. “In one of the rooms water bubbles into a floor-level basin, and the entire ceiling, with all its intricate faceting, is reflected mirrorlike in the basin from a certain angle, a display that was certainly intended by the designer.”(Campbell, 23)



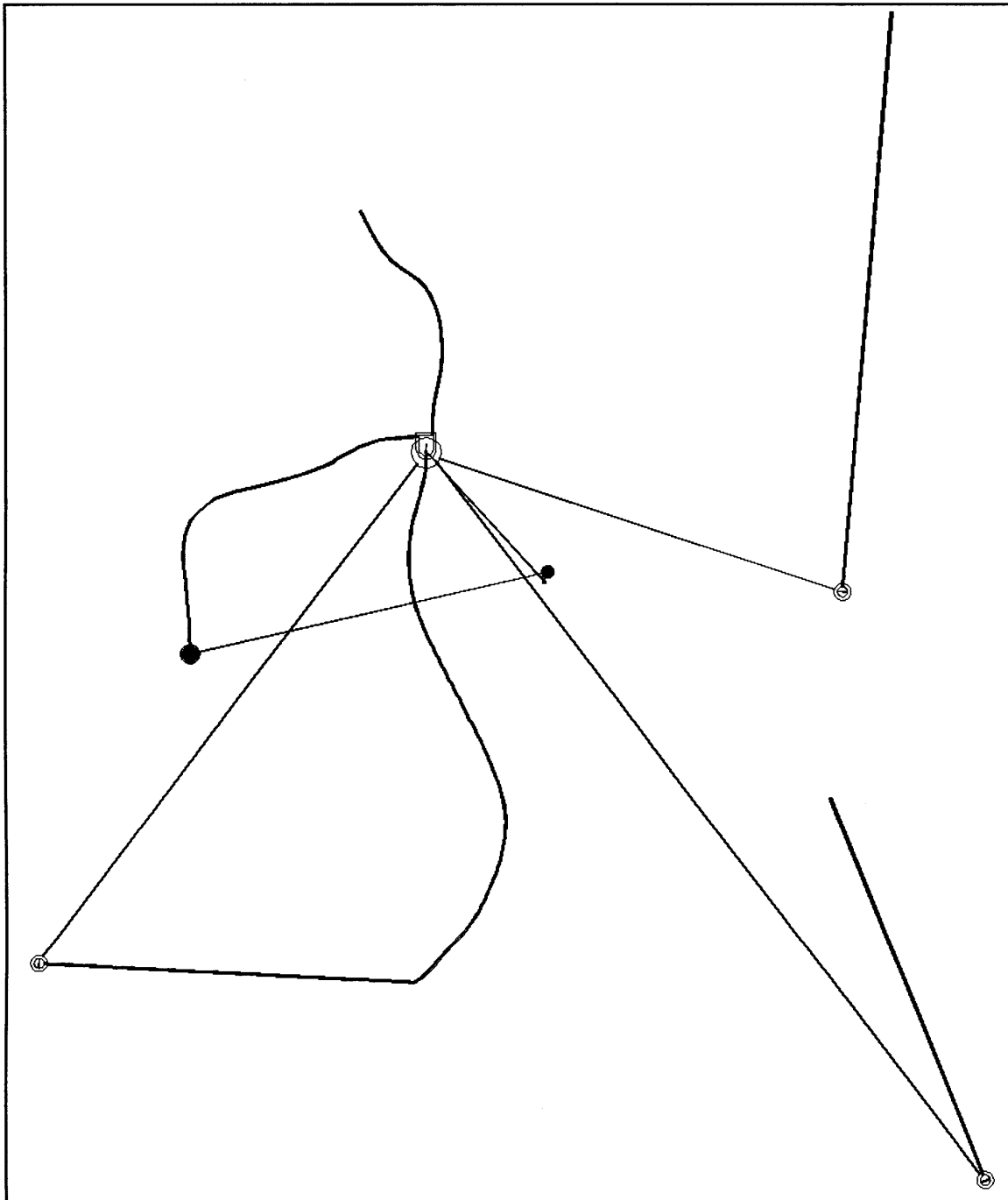
Court of Lions - Alhambra Campbell, p. 23



Court of Myrtles - Alhambra Campbell, p. 23

Throughout history, water has not only been an essential resource, a requisite for human survival, from which there evolved complex social rituals, but an important element of design in human habitation. Whether it emanates from a single solitary spout as a drinking fountain in Ancient Rome, or choreographed to perform in the water gardens of Versailles, or is laying motionless as a reflecting pool in the Alhambra, water has always played a crucial role in the physical, social, spiritual, and aesthetic aspects of our lives. It is from this framework that I have developed my proposal for the introduction of a reliable source of water to the Dungarven Road site.

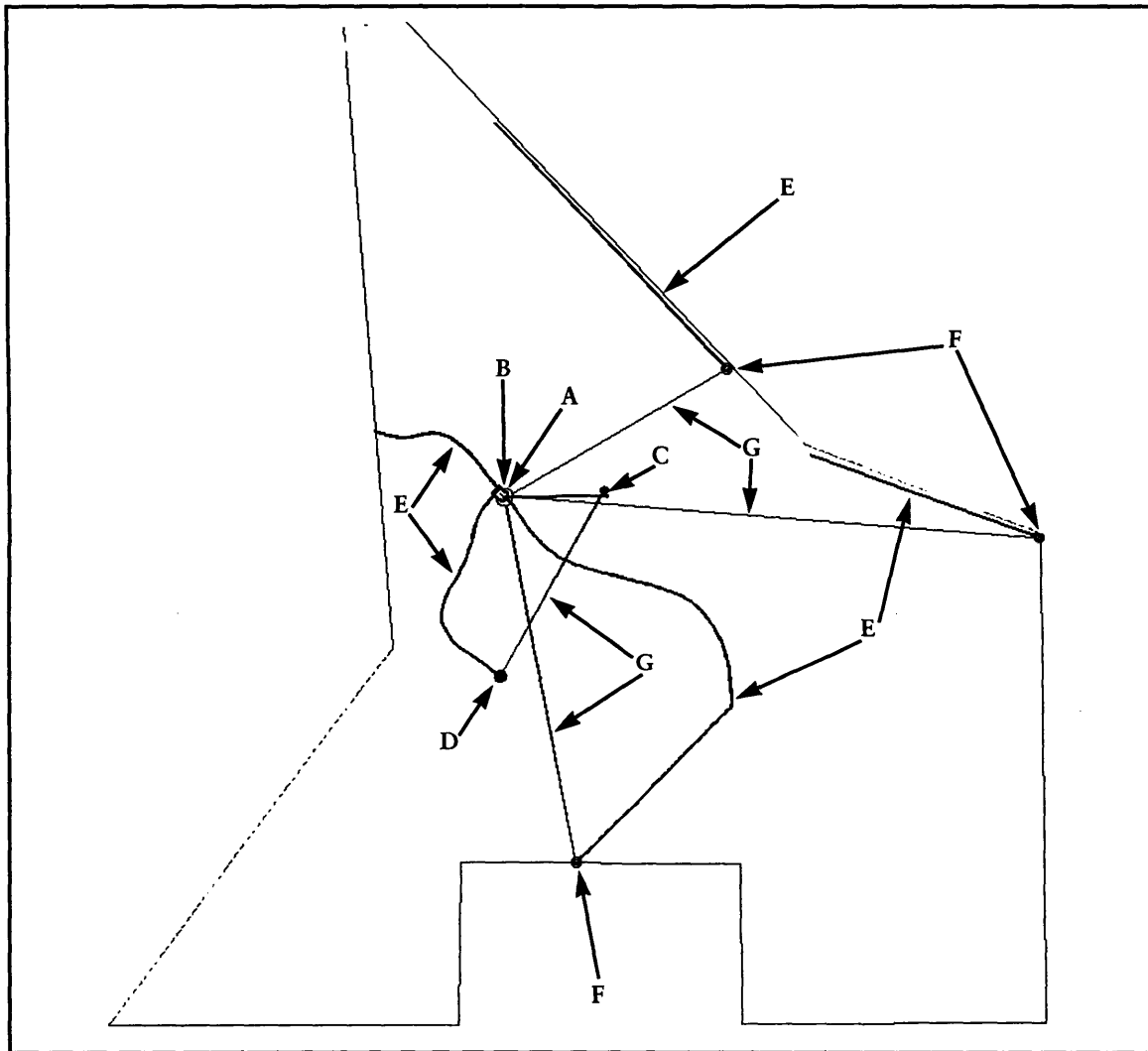
Water as a source of life, a means of continuity, a social instrument,  
and an exploration of garden and land.



*...Cello*

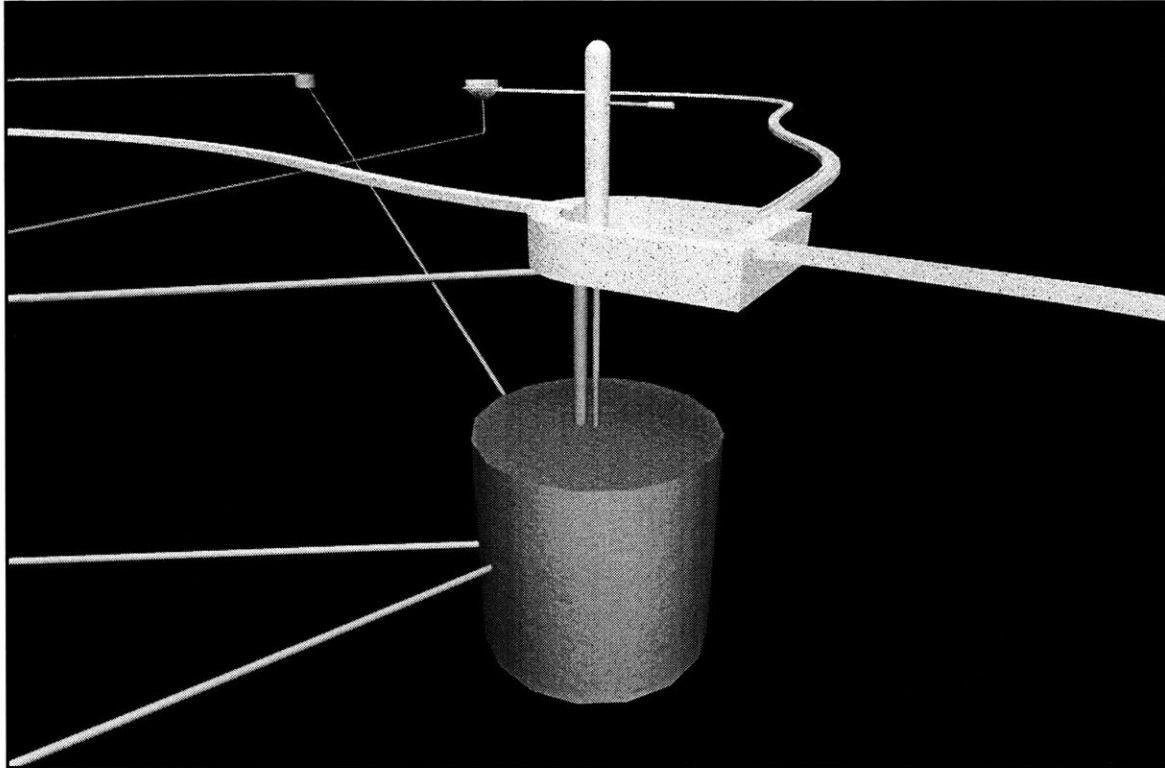
## Project Description

The public art project proposed for the Dungarven Rd. Site, uses both existing ground water through the sinking of a cistern/well, and excess rainfall to provide the garden with a reliable source of water. The work consists of a number of individual elements, which together comprise the installation I have named *Cello*. I will begin by describing the function of each of these, followed by an analysis of their role in the installation. I have included a rendering after each description, and the specifications and dimensions of these elements may be found in the appendix. The following project plan locates each of these elements within the site.



- |    |                      |    |                  |
|----|----------------------|----|------------------|
| A. | Cistern/Well         | E. | Collection Tiles |
| B. | Pumping Station      | F. | Collection Drum  |
| C. | Exposure Station     | G. | Conduit          |
| D. | Distribution Station |    |                  |

## Cistern/Well

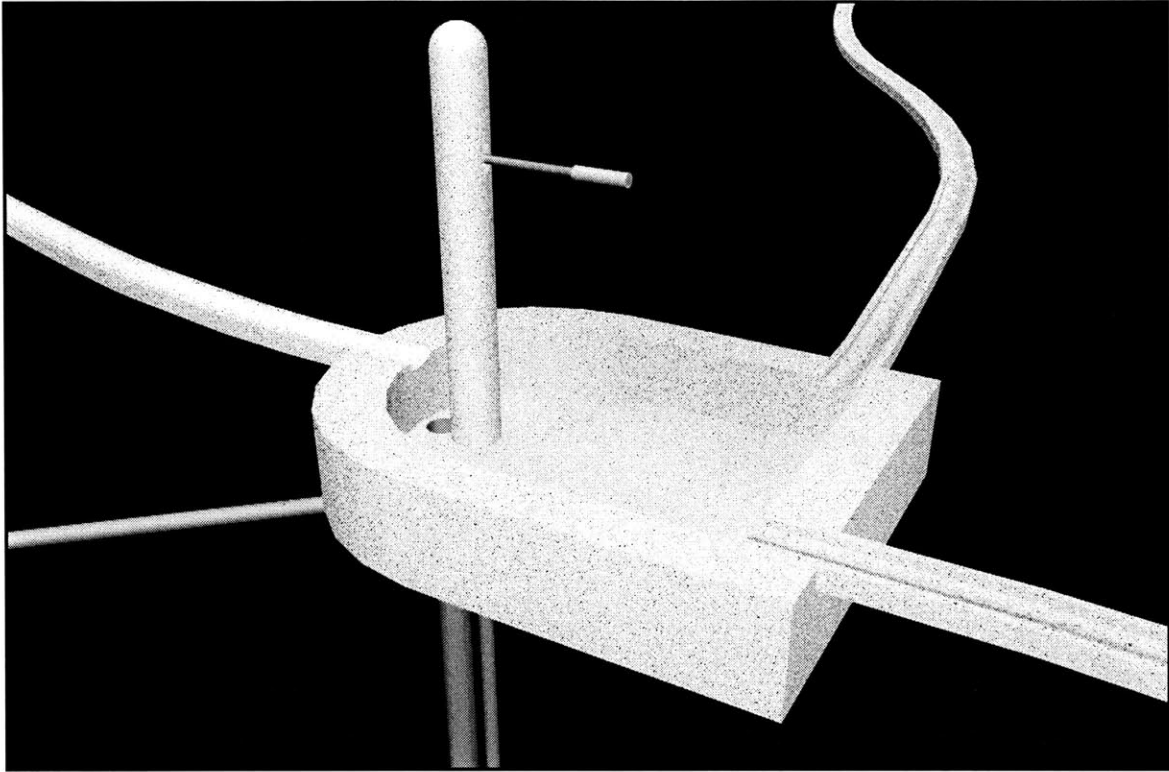


Cistern/Well

The *cistern/well* is located at a depth of 15 feet below the surface of the ground, at the lowest point of elevation on the site.

The two purposes of the *cistern/well* are: to tap into and store the water from the aquifer located above the clay strata; and to act as a containment vessel for excess rain water gathered from various locations across the site. This excess rain water is delivered to the *cistern/well* in two ways: the first is through underground conduit from *collection drums*; the second is through a drain located directly above it in the *pumping station*.

## Pumping Station



Pumping Station

The *pumping station* is a concrete structure situated directly above the *cistern/well*, and is comprised of a pump, platform, and drain. The pump is a concrete shaft which is actuated through a vertical displacement of its protruding handle. The platform supports the pump at its base, and its surface is depressed 8.5 inches from ground level. The drain is located directly behind the pump.

The *pumping station* has two purposes: to begin a process of water circulation, and to receive and direct water into its drain. The first function begins with a person standing on the sunken platform and beginning to pump. Water is drawn up from the cistern/well and is fed through an underground conduit to the *exposure station*. The second function, occurs in one of two ways: either through excess rainfall delivered to the pumping station via the *collection tiles*; or through overflow water from the *distribution station* delivered to the pumping station via the *collection tiles*.

## Exposure Station

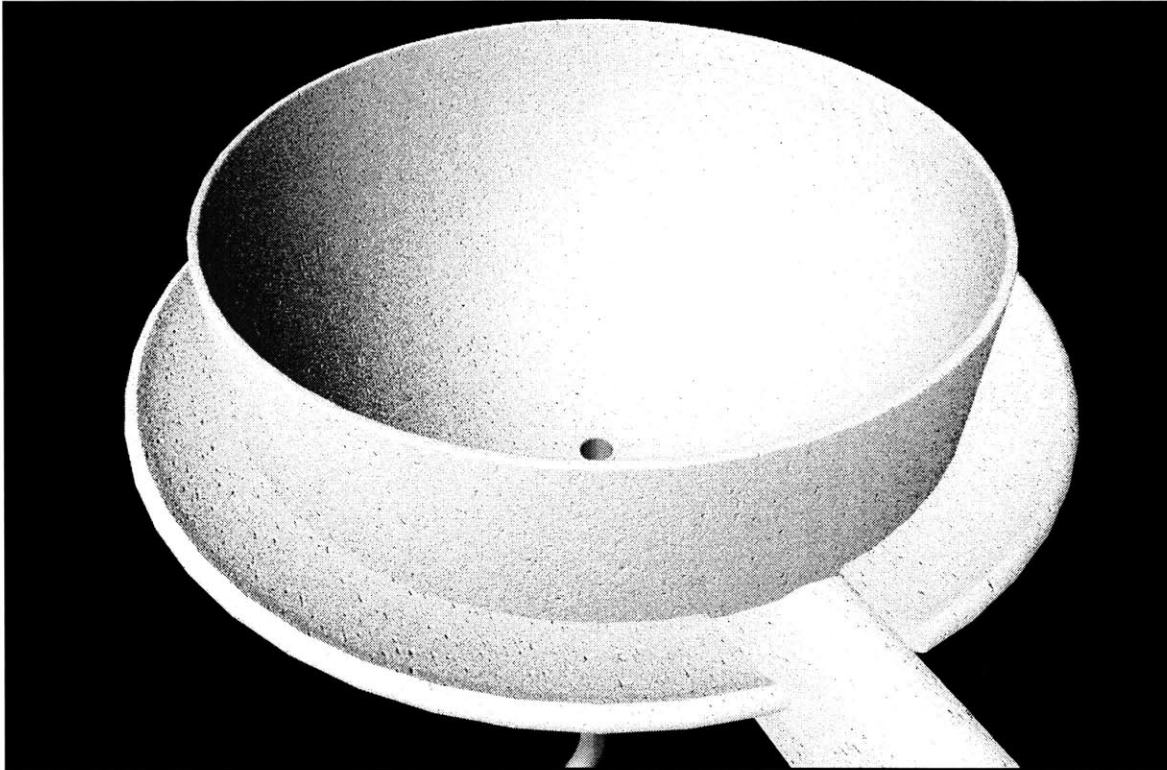


Exposure Station

The *exposure station* consists of a cast iron spout and a stainless steel basin with a central drain. The spout opens on to a seventeen inch long channel, cantilevered over the basin at a height of 11.25 inches from the ground. The basin is supported by four stainless steel posts, and its rim is .25 inches beneath the channel.

The purpose of the *exposure station* is to continue the process of circulation begun by the *pumping station*. Water is received through the underground conduit from the *pumping station*, and is then exposed in the open channel. It then falls into the basin and circles toward the drain, where it is once again directed into another underground conduit which leads to the *distribution station*. Water will not accumulate and spill over the edge, as the rim of the basin is at a higher level of elevation than the *distribution station*.

## Distribution Station



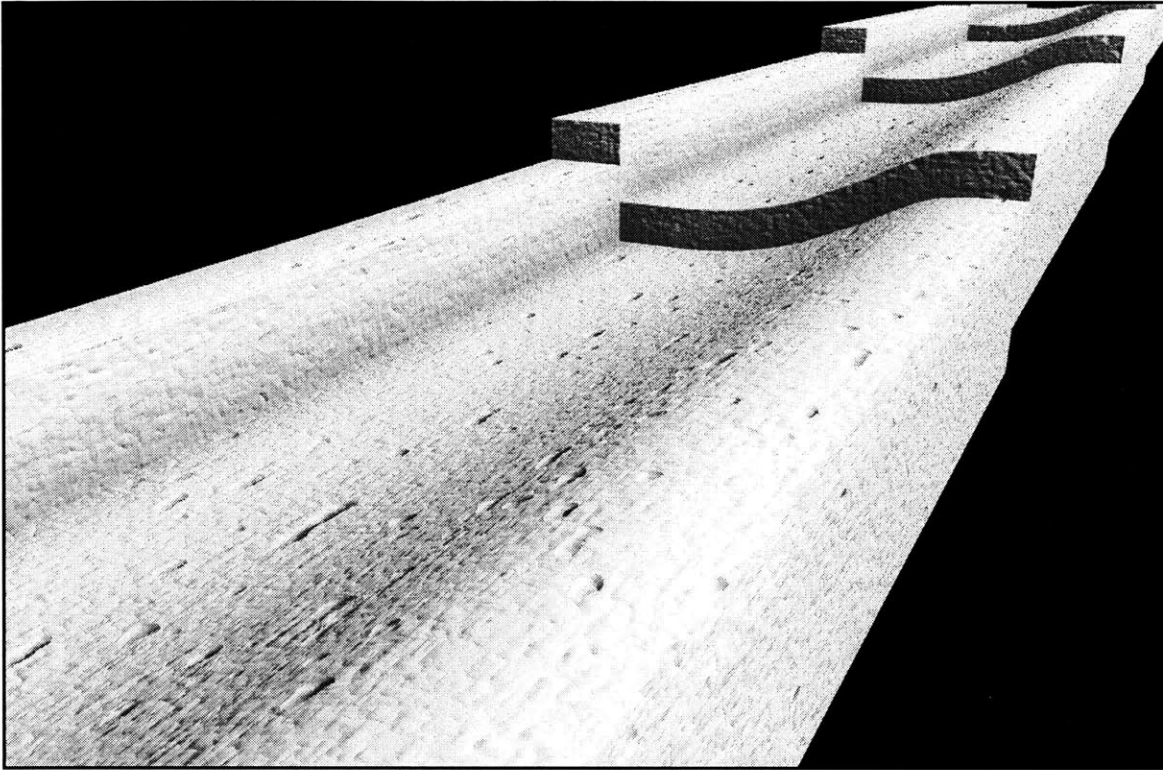
Distribution Station

The *distribution station* consists of a concrete bowl which is partially submerged in the ground, and a concrete apron which circumscribes the bowl at ground level. The diameter of the bowl is 3 feet, and the depth from its rim to its opening at its base is 18 inches. The 5 inch wide apron is sloped toward the bowl, and is broken by a *collection tile* at one point.

The purpose of the *distribution station* is to provide a centrally located point from which gardeners may fill their watering vessels, and to continue the process of circulation begun by the pumping station. Through the underground conduit from the *exposure station*, water fills the bowl through its opening in its base, and continues to rise to a level which permits bailing by gardeners. Because the *distribution station* is at a lower level of elevation than the *exposure station*, water will eventually rise to the rim and spill over. This excess water is then caught by the apron and directed into the *collection tile*, which leads back to the *pumping station*. Thus completing the cycle of circulation begun by the pumping of water.



## Collection Tiles

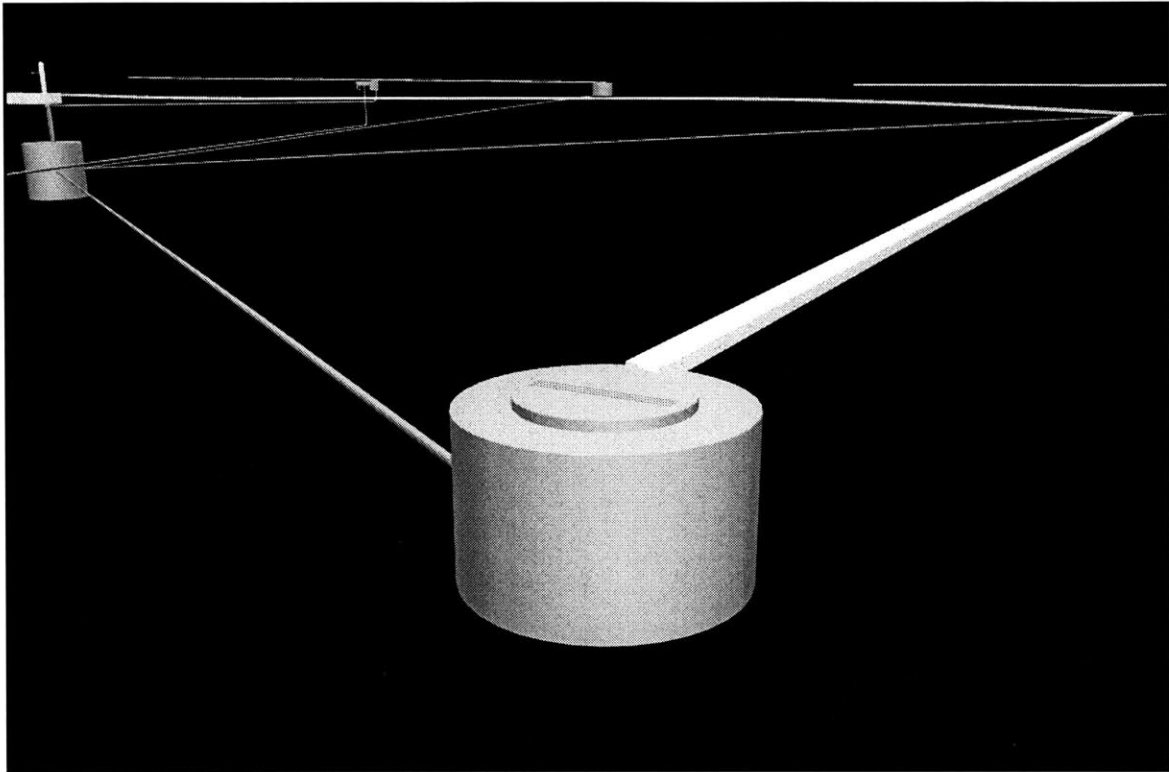


Collection Tiles

The *collection tiles* are made from concrete, and each measure 6 inches wide by 12 inches long. There is a sloped depression which runs throughout the length of each tile. The tiles are placed end to end, and laid in flush with the surface of the ground, thereby creating a continuous channel in which water may flow. There are a total of five *collection tile* channels throughout the site.

The *collection tiles* channels have two purposes: to gather excess rainfall and runoff water; and to deliver that water to either the *pumping station*, or to one of the *collection drums*. The first *collection tile* channel, runs from the *distribution station*, to the *pumping station*. The next runs along the main path from the entrance on Dungarven Rd, to the *pumping station*. The third continues along the main path from the *pumping station*, to the highest point of elevation on the site. It then continues downhill to a *collection drum*. The last two are located in the wooded area on the northern part of the site, and lead to two more *collection drums*.

## Collection Drum

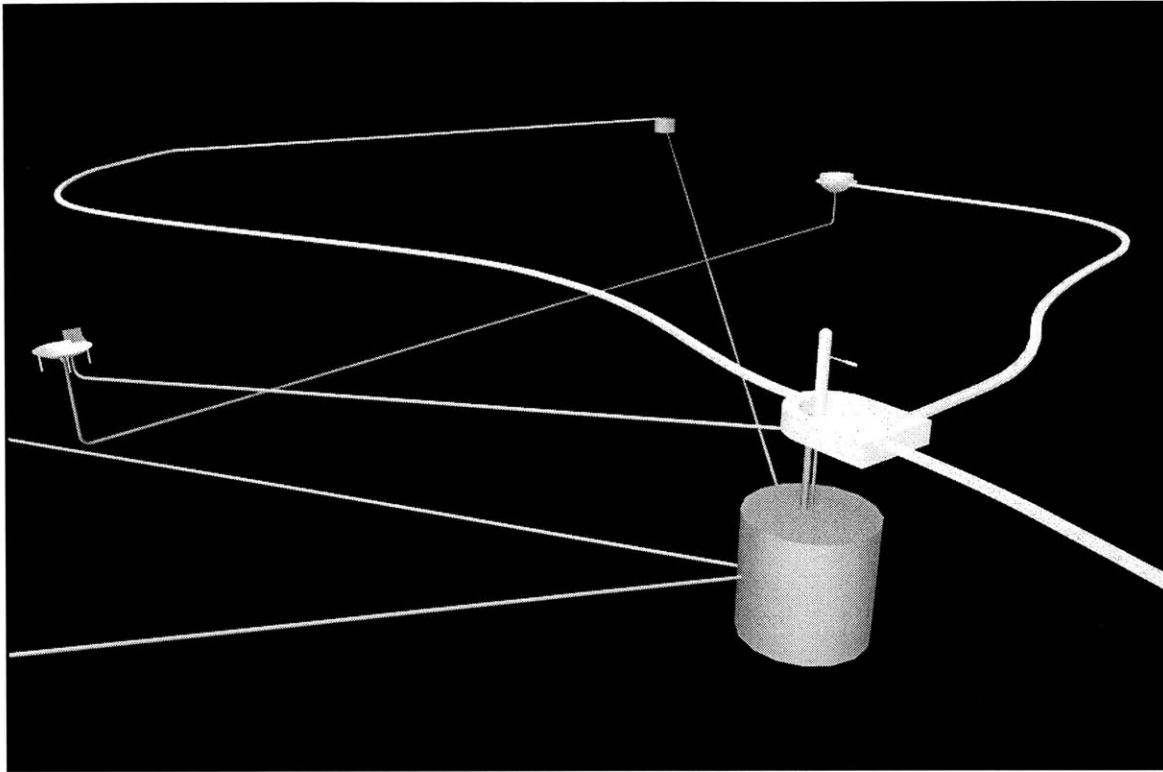


Collection Drum

There are three collection drums located throughout the site, each at the lowest point in elevation of the surrounding area. The top of each drum is flush with the surface of the ground, and has three elongated openings leading to its cavity.

The purpose of the *collection drum* is to act as a temporary reservoir, and replenish the water supply of the *cistern/well*. Excess rainfall from the *collection tiles*, is channeled into the *collection drum*. From here it is transported through an underground conduit leading from the base of the drum to the *cistern/well*.

## Analysis



Overall View of *Cello*

An analysis of *Cello* begins with the *pumping station*, for this is the beginning of the circulation of water. The location of this station (the lowest point of elevation on the site) makes it in one sense a natural drain, the point to which all water from the surrounding area will flow. The platform which one stands upon is not raised, but depressed eight and one half inches into the ground. In order for one to use the pump, one must step down into the ground and become part of the mechanism itself. In most pump/well configurations, when one begins to pump, water is presented immediately for that person to use (usually through a faucet affixed to the pump). In this case, however, water must first travel underground to the *exposure station*, and then to the *distribution station* some sixty feet away in the centre of the planting area, before it is available for use by *all gardeners*. This is in keeping with the other tasks which must be performed in the garden, from spring/fall cleanups to the periodic cutting of grass in which each gardener takes his or her respective turn. Therefore, one pumps not only for his/her own use, one pumps for all of the gardeners, and by extension for the neighbourhood and community.

The *exposure station* is the first point at which water appears in the circulation process, begun at the *pumping station*. It is located approximately thirty five feet from the *pumping station*, in the grass area set aside for recreational activities. Here, water emerges from the spout and travels the length of the channel in one continuous sheet. It then falls down resonating the raised stainless steel basin, circles toward the drain and ultimately disappears into an underground conduit which leads to the *distribution station*. The *exposure station* is a meaningful and important component of *Cello* for three reasons. The first is that it provides a type of philosophical departure, in which water is revealed briefly as a deviation from its ultimate goal of nourishing plants. The second is that it exposes some of the inherent physical properties and behavioral characteristics of water during its course from spout to drain. The third reason is that it is one side of an symbolic see-saw (the other being the *distribution station*), which both exhibits, and focuses attention on the elevations of the land.

The *distribution station* is located seventy-three feet from the *exposure station* in the centre of the planting area. Because this station is at a lower level of elevation than the *exposure station*, water from the *exposure station* will rise up through the opening in its base, and fill the concrete bowl. The size of the bowl permits one to fully submerge his/her watering vessel and fill it with water. One may then carry it to his/her planting bed which is in close proximity (due to the central location of the station). Water will eventually spill over the rounded rim of the bowl and will be caught by the bowl's apron. From here it is directed into a *collection tile* which takes it back to the pumping station, thereby completing the cycle of circulation. The *distribution station* fulfills three crucial roles in the installation. The first is that it makes water available to all gardeners to use in the watering of their plants. The second is that it is the other side of the see-saw, the raised elevation of the *exposure station* rendering the see-saw in a constant state of imbalance. Finally, the *distribution station* is the symbolic *well* of *Cello*. It is the point at which gardeners gather and potentially engage in a social discourse. It is a source of life for the garden, and a meeting ground for the neighbourhood.

The *collection tiles* traverse the site across lines of elevation, leading to either the *pumping station* or the *collection drums*. During periods of rain, water that is not absorbed into the ground will flow downhill until it reaches one of five *collection*

*tile* channels. The smooth surface of the concrete channels will provide the water with a path of low resistance on its way to the *pumping station* or one of the *collection drums*. Once in the channel, the water will be interrupted by the small steps in elevation, as each tile is progressively set lower in the ground. It should be noted that one of these channels serves a dual purpose, it not only collects excess rainfall, but runs from the *distribution station* to the *pumping station*, carrying the overflow water back to where it began its journey. The *collection tiles* serve in one sense to map the site, revealing subtle transitions in elevation. Because the site is relatively flat, the only reliable way to determine the exact placement of these tiles was to literally pour water from a bucket over the ground and follow its course, thereby mapping the land.

The *collection drums* are located at the lowest points of elevation at the extremities of the site. During a period of rainfall, water from one of the *collection tile* channels, will be deposited into one of these drums, and then flow into an underground conduit which takes it to the *cistern/well* (to be stored and eventually become part of the cycle of circulation). The *collection drum* serves as temporary storage vessel for water, and in so doing audibly reveals itself through the sound of water dropping into its cavity. Moreover, it provides the *cistern/well* with an additional source of water, above the amount which has already been obtained through tapping into the existing aquifer.

All of the individual elements are important components of *Cello*, and each one contributes differently to its purpose. *Cello* explores and maps the land, and reveals the subtle changes in elevation of the site. It acts as a social instrument, which both affirms and exposes the cooperative nature of the garden, and borrows from a rich history of communal wells. It exhibits some of the physical qualities and behavioral characteristics of water, through its different stations and collection devices. It encourages continued participation in garden through making an essential source of life readily available for all gardeners to use, thereby helping to keep the site a public place. It does all of this from the simple introduction of a reliable source of water to the garden.



## *Concluding Thoughts*

The proposed public art project for the Dungarven Rd. garden in its entirety, may be seen as the sum of three unifying elements. The first is the practical, in that through its form, it helps fulfill a functional need of the people who use the garden. The second is the technological, in that the technology is of a different time (there are no electric pumps or motors etc.), and this basic ‘old world’ technology in conjunction with the forces of nature, serves to connect people to a land in a very direct way. The third is the social, in that it constructs both social and communal relationships within the site, by helping to establish values which address the community.

*Cello* illustrates the role I have chosen to play as an artist, and through this my particular art practice. The various artists which I have examined earlier, have given a framework from which this work may be situated, and as I have alluded to earlier, *Cello* addresses some of the themes and issues associated with these artists’ work. A summary of these themes and issues as they pertain to my work, would be beneficial in locating my work in contemporary art practices.

I have characterized Alan Sonfist’s work as creating an awareness of the natural systems and cycles of time in the environment. Although it is not implicit in the work, *Cello* borrows from this sensibility, in that it encourages the natural cycles of time inherent in the garden, to continue on land that has been historically rural. It is not an uncovering of these cycles though a of “visual archaeology”, which restores an urban site to its “natural” form, thereby rendering it a type of living museum. Moreover, it is a mechanism which encourages the participation of people in that cycle, both as observers and as gardeners, in a urban location which acts as a type of living school.

The garden of Ian Hamilton Finlay, in one sense instructs on social issues. It may be characterized as a type of social landscape, in which he uses neoclassical imagery in various sculptural, architectural, and poetic forms to disseminate ethical values which address contemporary society. Similarly, *Cello* addresses contemporary social issues, but in a very different way. *Cello* does not instruct, but reveals

and affirms the social nature of the garden, and is in one sense a monument to that which already exists. Everyone who gardens, has an understanding of the importance of maintaining the site as a neighbourhood resource, and all give of themselves in some capacity without an imposed bureaucracy governing the site. *Cello* does not use a specific visual language to reveal this, it does so simply by providing an essential component of gardening, and borrowing from the rich tradition and history of the communal well.

The work of Newton Harrison, and Helen Mayer Harrison, and their particular practice, is in one way very close to my work, in that their work addresses the relationship of humans to their environment. *Cello* not only reveals the relationship of the people living in the area to the garden, but demonstrates (by encouraging gardening) the beneficial aspects of that relationship, through all of the social and environmental implications of urban gardens. The Harrisons' practice, though site specific, sometimes encompasses enormous ecosystems, which stretch for thousands of square miles. *Cello* is more modest in scale, and because of my relationship to the garden, I am in a very different position than the Harrisons' are to their sites. Earlier I detailed my three aesthetic interests in the garden, as gardener, area resident, and artist, and all of these contributed to my proposed work. I am not suggesting that in order to make a work of art in a public place, one must be equally involved with the proposed site. I am, however, suggesting that because of my involvement with the garden and community, my work has been informed by my position, and that someone without this position, would not have such an intimate view.

I would characterize my role as an artist who works in the public realm as a multifaceted one, borrowing from traditions of the past and drawing from contemporary societal issues to define a new kind of practice. I have adopted this multifaceted role in the development of *Cello*, which if realized will: introduce a reliable source of water to the Dungarven Rd. neighbourhood garden; reveal some of the physical qualities of water; map and explore the topography of the land; act as a type of social instrument; and will perhaps in some way assist in keeping the site a public place. I have chosen this role and this type of practice, because it allows me to not only make a meaningful contribution on many levels to the community, but in so doing extends the understanding of how artists work in the land.



Finally it is important to recognize that *Cello* is not a way to preserve the status-quo of the site, for that is surely an impossibility. The garden, as all things subject to the laws of nature and shaped by human intervention, is in a constant state of flux and will change over time. It is a living entity, one small part of a larger equation, the sum of which forms a community. In the end, the greater art here will not be this small gesture of introducing a reliable source of water to the garden, it will be the culmination of all which has contributed to the existence of the Dun- garven Rd. community space.

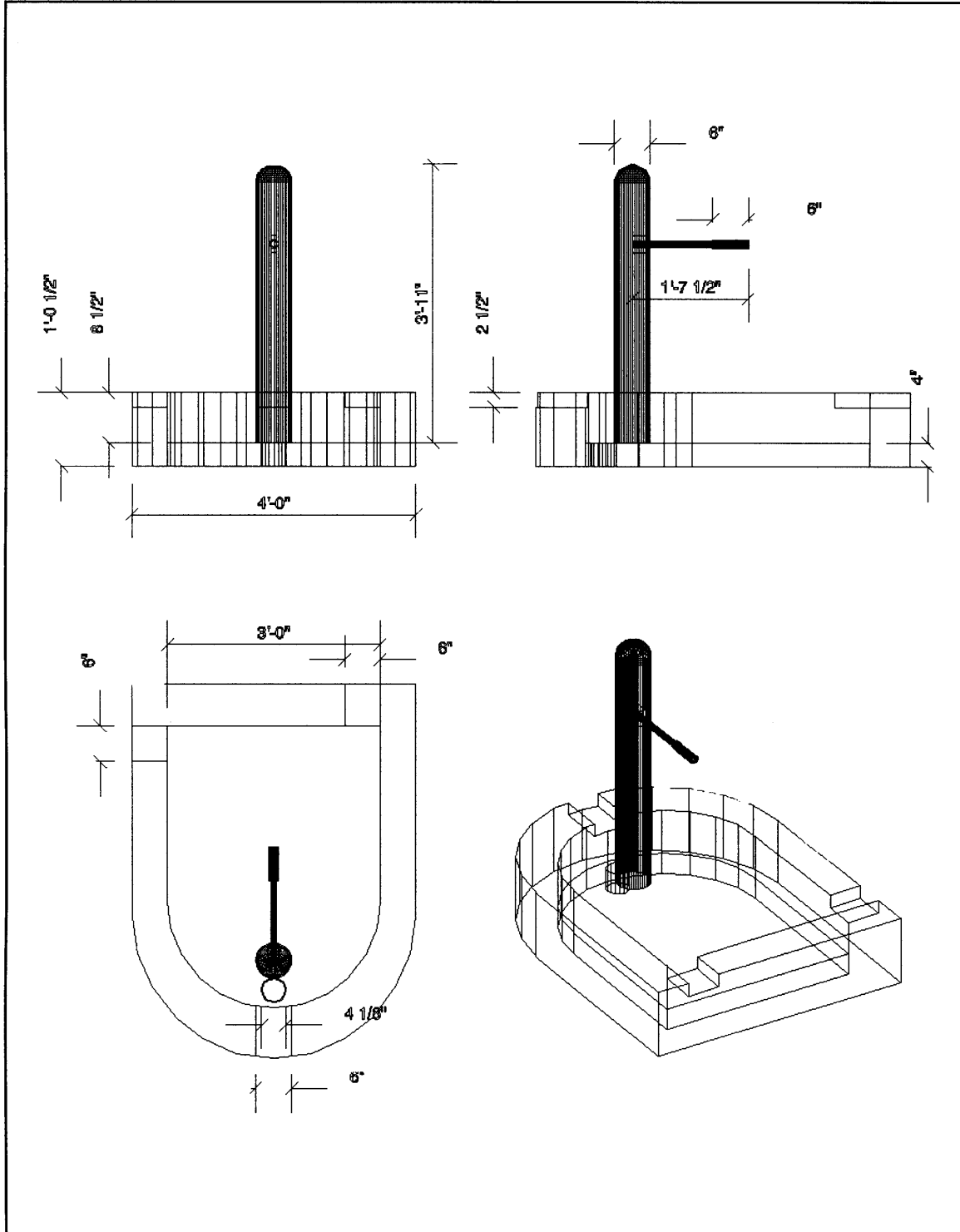


*Pumping Station in the Garden-* David B. Smith

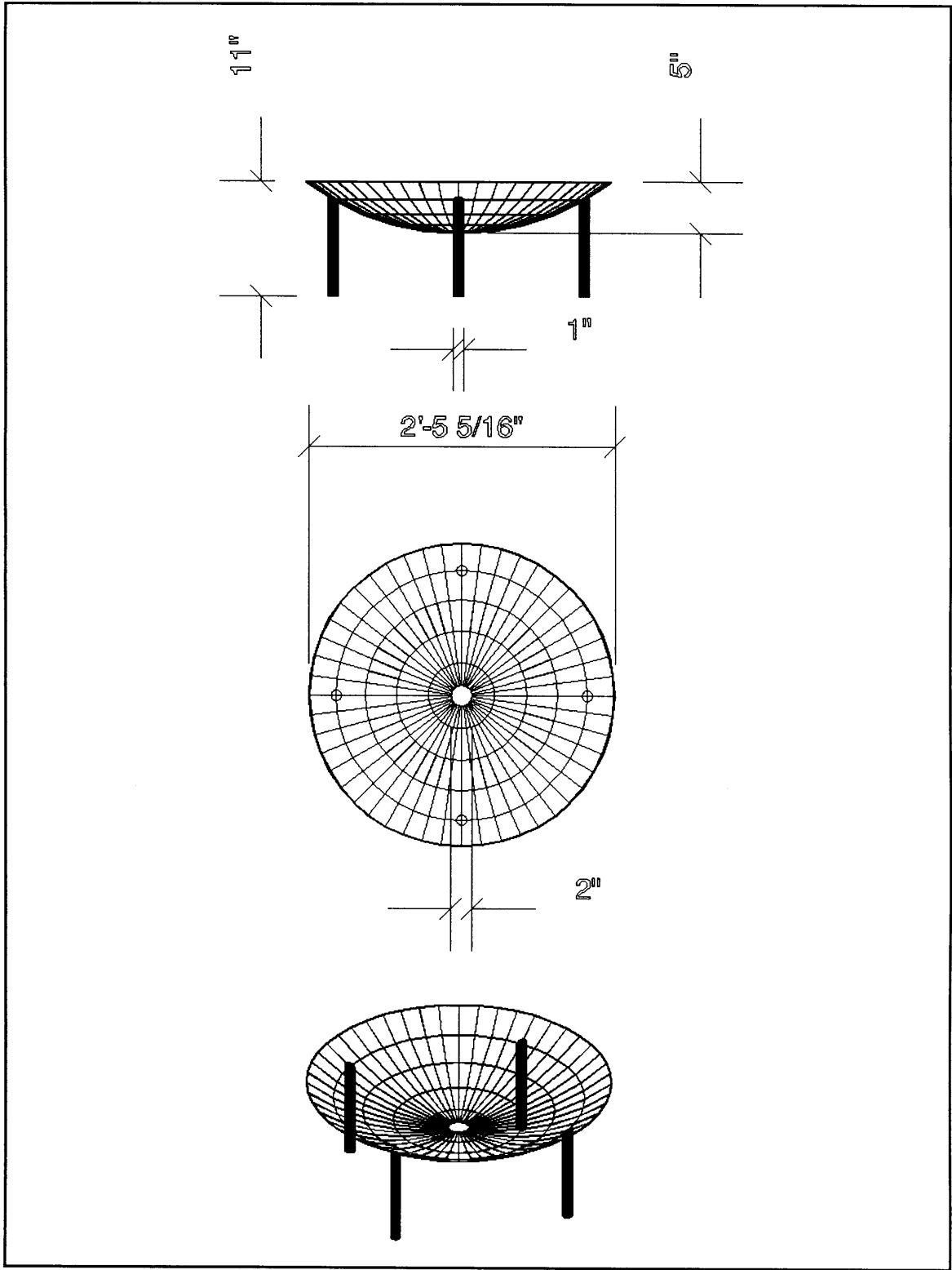


# Appendix

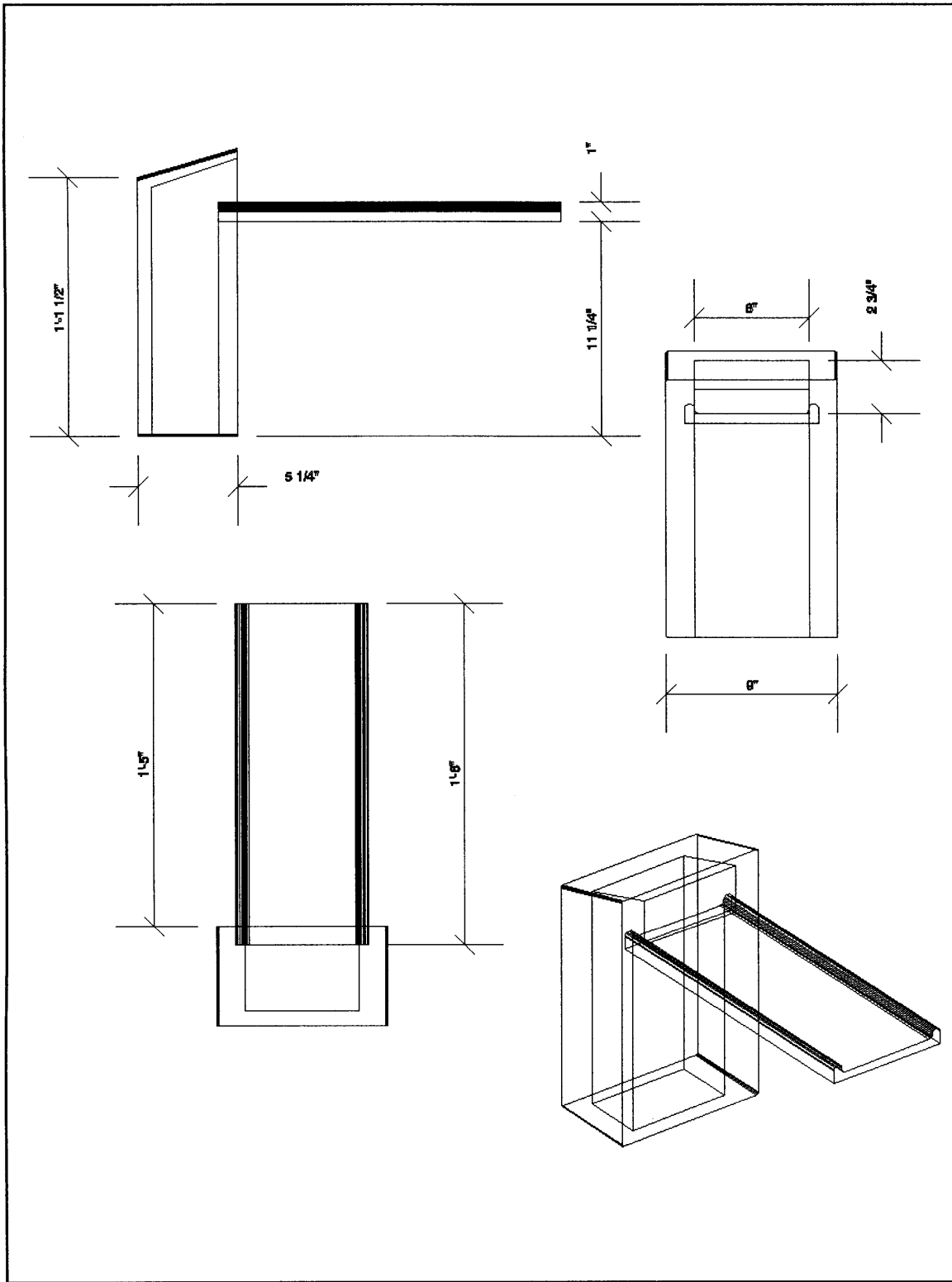
## Pumping Station



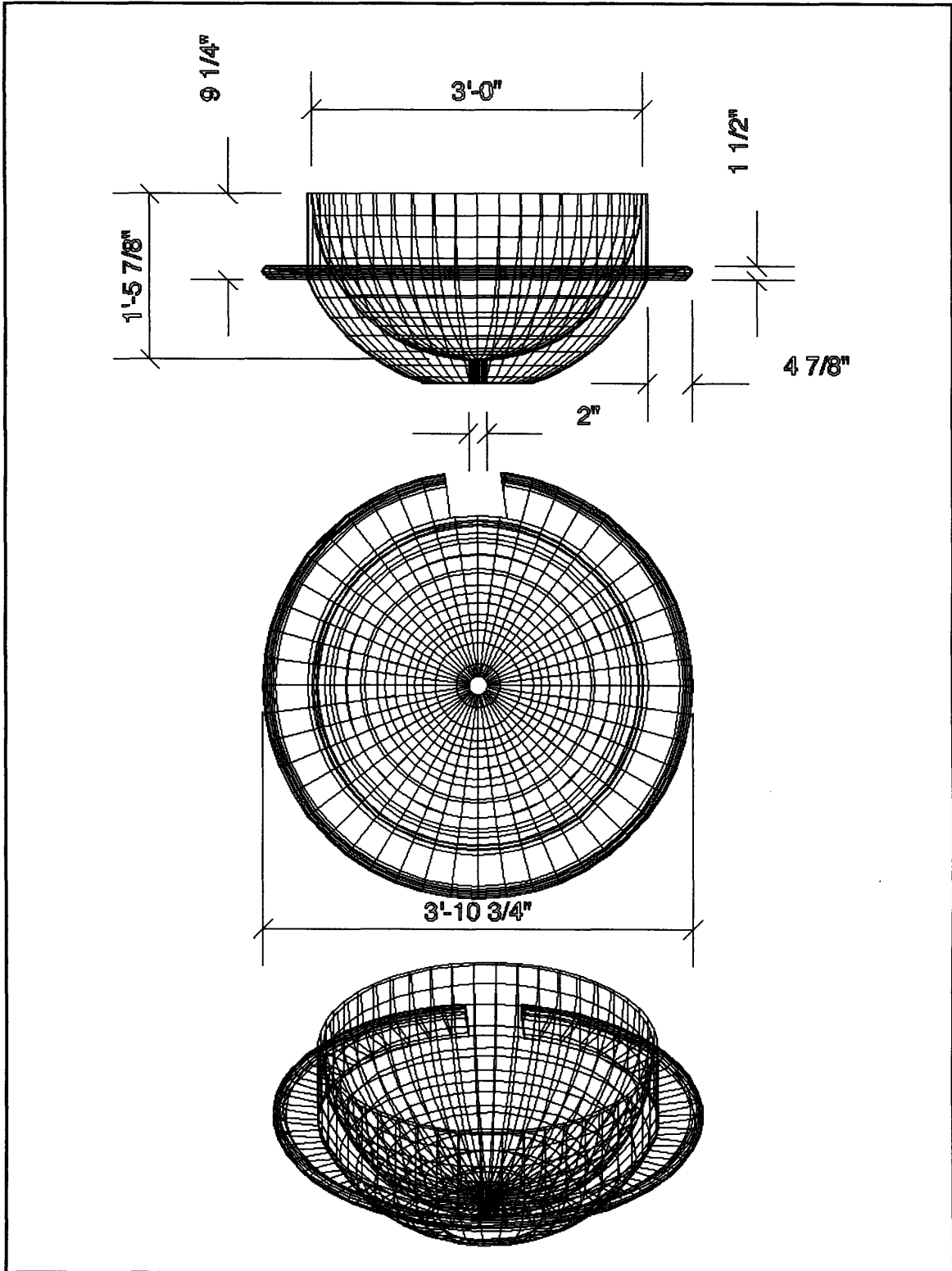
# Exposure Station - Basin



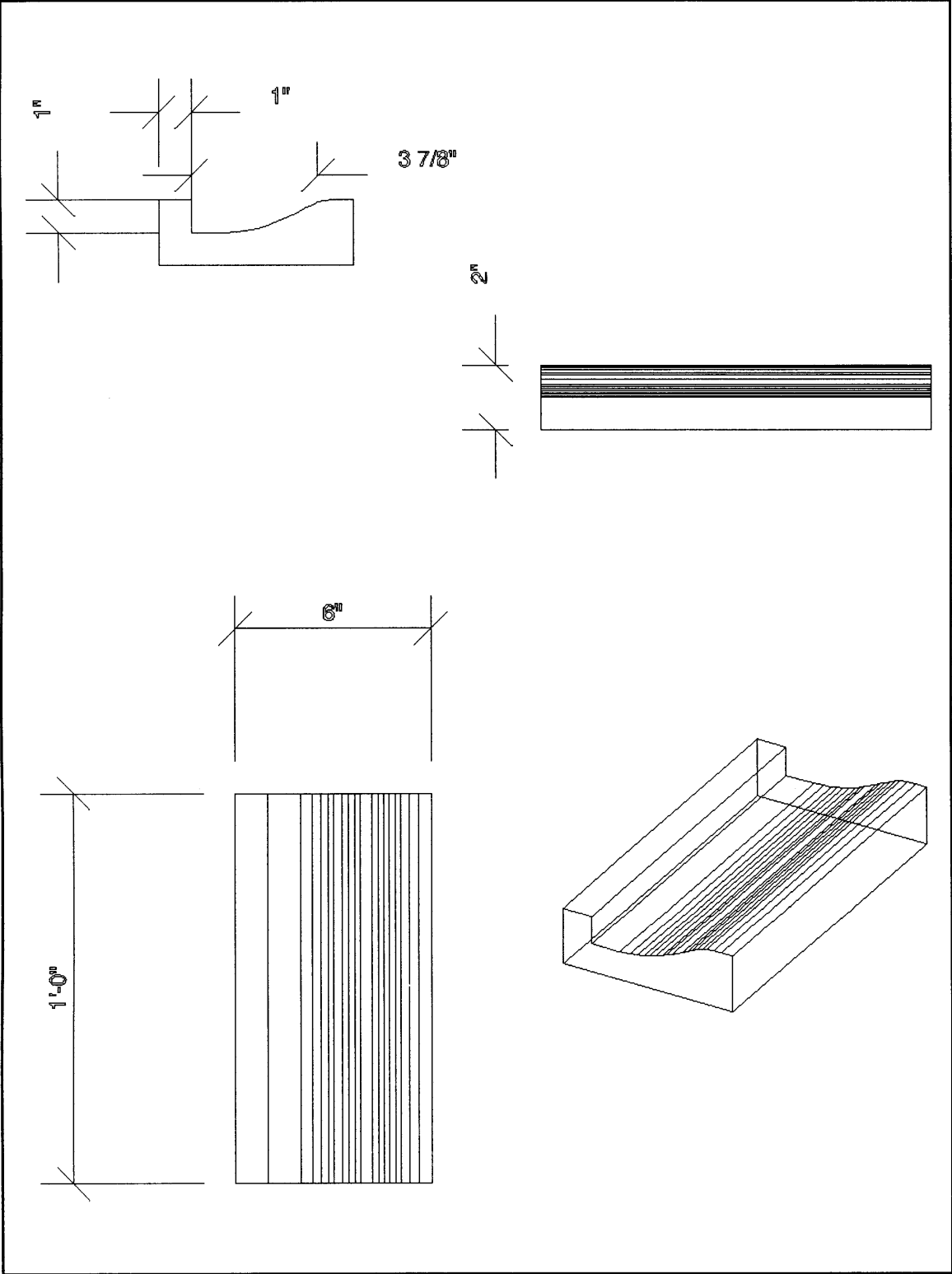
# Exposure Station - Feed



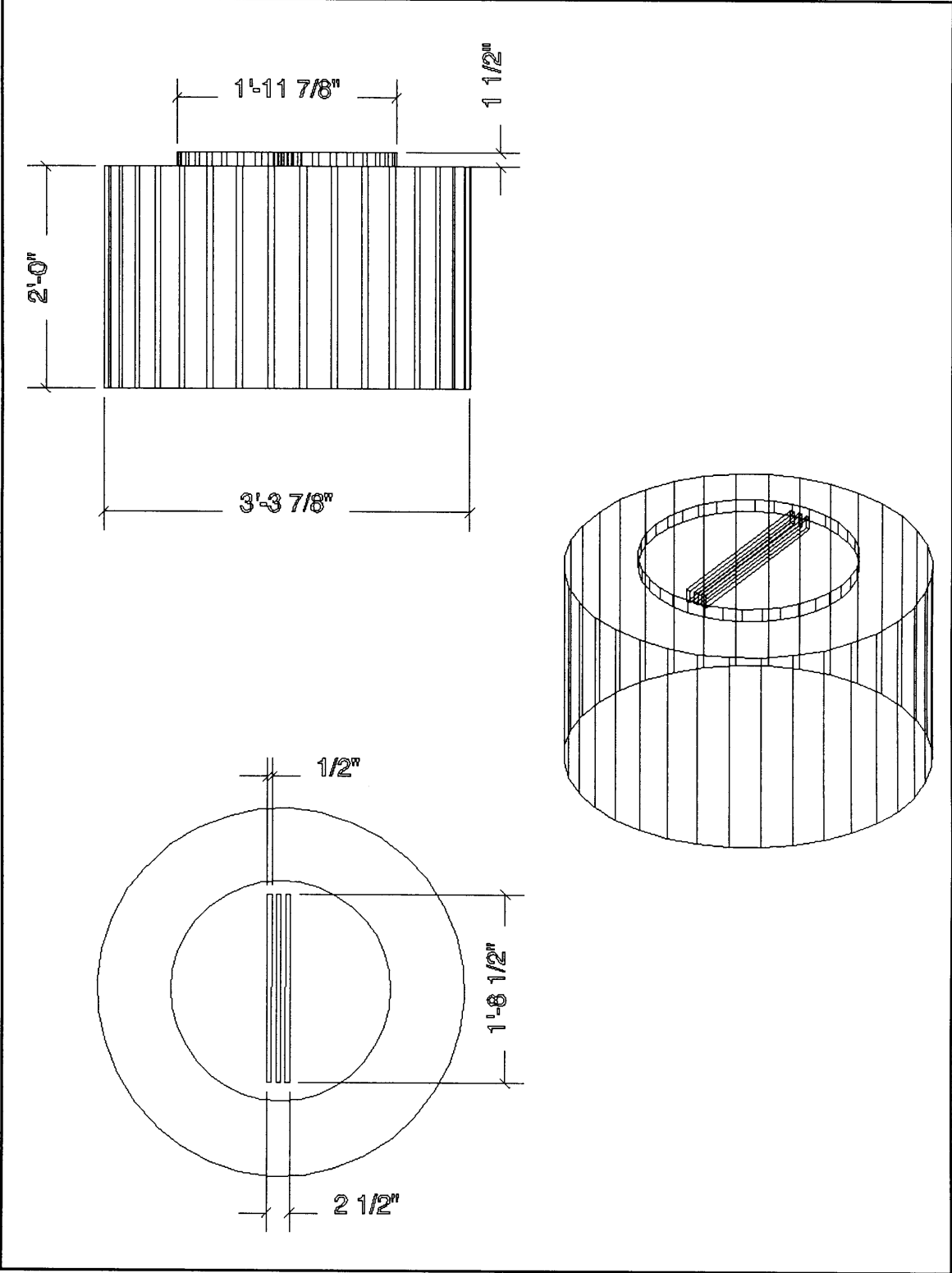
# Distribution Station



Collection Tile



Collection Drum





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