

Saint Sebastian
and
the
Garden



GARY DWYER

Saint Sebastian and the Garden

Photographs and Text By GARY DWYER

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This book is dedicated to all the farmers and ranchers in this world who take the trouble to feed us from the biggest garden of all; to Saint Sebastian - wherever you are I wish you had quit when you were ahead; to Lila Acheson Wallace who gave her money away to restore a garden that continues to be enjoyed by millions and finally to HAD and Qubert and that French girl with whom I hang around.

A strong and direct tip of the hat goes to Paul Gardère of New York, for his brilliance, patience and wit during our joint residency in Giverny. Thanks also to Clair Joyes and her book, 'Claude Monet : Life at Giverny,' and to Elizabeth Murray for her book, 'Monet's Passion.' Thanks to The Académie des Beaux-Arts, and especially to Gerald Van der Kemp without whom much of France's cultural history might have been lost. Much of the writing contained in this book was begun in 1993. It takes a long time for some gardens to bear fruit.

<http://www.garydwyerphotography.com/>



*Gary Dwyer staring at the San Andreas Fault in 1983
Elkhorn Plain, California*

Those who have made a picnic of looking are left to record it.

Paula Bohince

It may take you a long time to understand the title of this book.

What I view as a relatively direct route may seem convoluted and obscure to others. Perhaps this book is not about gardens after all and even less about Saint Sebastian.

There is an outside chance that this book is about Rousseau, but

I'm not convinced. *Thinking about the world*

might be the real topic. Claude Monet made me do it.

Day **BEFORE** anything else.

“Everything looks perfect from far away.”

Iron and Wine - Garden State Soundtrack

I have spent far too much time thinking about gardens. I am going to stop thinking about gardens pretty soon, but I have a few things I want to say first.

Anyone who reads this book will come to these words **flip ping through the book from back to front**. We do this because we can't wait, and because we don't like being told what to do. I spent a great deal of time putting this book together in a specific order and if the reader is something other than a cavalier nitwit and actually wants to know what I have come up with after thinking about gardens, they are going to read this damn thing and then the answer as to why I did the pages in sequence might become clear. Words in sentences are sequential. So are the pages in this book. At least they are in my puny little brain. If you can't see the logic, well, too bad.

For a very long time, I have avoided the topic of *Gardens*, and I think it is because I don't understand them, but as you will soon see, I have an awful lot of ideas about them. Perhaps the real reason behind this book is to understand them better. Perhaps it is a really sleazy way to get the reader to look at more of my photographs. Right now, it's a toss-up.

Even though it has been happening for decades, I have never been comfortable being associated with gardens.

I planted some bushes for my parents in their front yard, but that doesn't qualify. I don't have any great affinity for things botanic. I worked for the U.S. Forest service and I later I was forced to learn a lot of Latin names of plants, but so what? The idea of a garden confused me so, along the years, I tried to understand it better, and my thoughts ended up here:

- 1** What is a Garden
- 2** What is Nature and how do I see it
- 3** A Garden has Borders
- 4** Water in the Garden
- 5** Plants and what we do to them
- 6** I am Temporarily Able-Bodied
- 7** Saint Sebastian.



WHAT

I

One





*Morning mist on the lake
County Monaghan, Ireland*



It is November and this part of County Monaghan is far enough North in Ireland to be in Ulster, but geography pales on the way to the grocery store where machine guns and camouflage are sadly still part of the journey. The light comes late and fades early in these Northern latitudes and the people here think of light as something bringing color and a vague indication of form. Clarity and brilliance are thought here, but not often seen. Annaghmakerrig is the name of the place I have come to. The name kind of rolls off the tongue doesn't it? At least it did the way the taxi driver said it. And, he said, "Boards," and was surprised when I didn't know he was talking about 'Pheasants.' He also said, *"If you going to be here for a whole month, you ought to get at least one, or even two, sunny days."*

A few days have passed, and as yet, it has not rained. No, the skies have not been black with storm, but the worrisome part is that I have not seen a shadow. I have just returned from a walk alongside a lake in this most rounded of drumlin landscapes. At the halfway point I neared the end of the lake and went up to its boggy edge and stood among the sedges and listened to the nothing. There was a light breeze on the water, but not enough to make any noise. The clouds over the lake were no longer their earlier uniform smooth gray but had broken into rounded clumps rubbing into one another, like businessmen on a winter subway. As the noiseless clouds roiled above the lake, the colors of the land slid away. The spruces on the opposite shore went from fuzzy green lumps to the silhouette of a black saw blade against a darkening sky. Light was being sucked out and I could see night coming toward me. There were two small breaks in those clouds and when the breaks passed overhead I looked up through the hole, only to see a second layer of clouds.

Just as the cloud hole passed the zenith, the second layer unzipped itself and flashed a light and pale northern blue. And as quickly as it came, it zipped back up and left. I was delighted by this titillation, this aerial strip tease. As I walked back in the darkness, I realized that if I was able to be jerked around by a little color change in the sky, a little cumulous cleavage, it was about time I figured out what was my relationship with nature and how it became that way?

By the accident of osmosis I have absorbed fragmentary ideas from other people but I have never really internalized any singular vision that would make me as an acolyte in any one particular camp. One of the reasons is memory, or in my case, forgetfulness. If we humans are

supposed to be so far up the food chain, why are most of our memory banks so fickle, undependable and quirky? Is it a question for another time? Perhaps, but memory is a component of my comprehension. It allows me to conveniently forget something I was supposed to hold on to and simply slide into something more currently acceptable. It allows me to do so with hardly a recrimination over not only having changed horses, but allows me to think it completely acceptable to have jumped off in mid-stream. My understanding of nature changes horses all the time. We know we are concerned, even outraged about various aspects of environmental quality, but when pressed, aside from self-preservation, we have surprising difficulty explaining why we are concerned at all.

Any cognizant person will attest to the fact that our relationship with nature has changed dramatically in the recent past and that general environmental quality has rapidly gone downhill. The process of addressing a series of questions about nature may allow me to discover some greater clarity about my relationship with it. Love of nature is like fear of farting, we know it is part of us, but we don't know what to do about it.



*Lake Annaghmakerrig
County Monaghan, Ireland*

What are the metaphysics of nature? What is real?

Ta Meta ta phusika “the things after the physics” Aristotle called them; because they came after his treatise on Physics, but we have come to know metaphysics as the study of being (ontology) and often, the structure of the universe (cosmology). Metaphysics spends most of its effort on the study of first principles and the problems of ultimate reality. In the metaphysics of nature, the first question seems to be: What is nature and how do we know what it is?

In order to address this question, we can be intuitive, empirical, or analytical and I would present that any understanding is inevitably a function of all three. If we are intuitive, not being children in the wilderness, we are also being empirical. That is to say, we have some experience of nature and draw on that experience to explain what nature has come to mean to us. Consequently, on the basis of our involvement with it, nature is how it seems to us. If we have little experience with nature we have a small pool of information to work with and what nature is will be colored by that perception. Many people in industrialized societies have relatively little contact with nature and as a result have very little experiential understanding of what constitutes nature, while rural people have the immediacy of nature assisting with their comprehension. You might say the reason we are having a difficult time in our relationship with nature is because we live in cities. We have very limited personal and perceptual experience with nature itself and therefore it doesn't seem much of anything to us in our daily urban lives.

We do live in this moment. And this particular moment holds some very contemporary conditions which effect all the questions we raise about nature:

- The presence of media constitutes a difference from earlier times and that presence causes us to bear the collective weight of the volume of people in the world and the number of decisions those people make. Cable television connects us to the rest of the world and increases our sense of powerlessness. All we do is watch.
- We have become more self-contradictory as a specie and have come to feel pride and status in indignation and have uncovered a perverse satisfaction in collective guilt without collective action.
- We have a newly defined distrust of authority because we recognize they may exercise or express a

form of order based on a specific favoritism rather than universally held principles.

- We love the idea of equality but refuse to understand it to be an unachievable myth. (n.b. I will never be a concert pianist or a mathematician, no matter how much I think things should be equal. See Kurt Vonnegut's ‘The Handicapper General.’)
- We distrust the concept of truth because we don't seem to be able to determine what it is.
- We want to start fresh, with a clean slate, but Paul Varilio reminds us in his ‘Aesthetics of Disappearance.’ that, ‘The idea of the ‘Tabula Rasa’ is only a trick to deny particular absences any active role.’ And he goes on to remark that in a society where things are moving at an ever increasing speed, at some point, it is not necessary to know anything more about something than it is going fast.
- Nature is violent, chaotic, unpredictable, and uncontrollable, and so, as Camille Paglia reminds us, is television.
- We realize there are only a few people who fall into categories like gracious, smart, kind and honest. Simultaneously we realize there are whole lot of people out there who fall into the category of ‘fool or idiot.’ They are mean spirited and self centered, driven by greed, arrogance, stupidity and sloth and they are not going to change just because we would like them to.
- What we think we use to make decisions is not what we use. There is less connection between believing in something and doing something about that belief than in any time in history. We hold onto fragments, little chips of ideas and prejudices, because we are too lazy to study address and consider the whole.
- It has become perfectly acceptable to hold multiple and conflicting philosophical postures. We have come to terms with our inconsistency. This happened because we no longer believe in universal truth. We see there are too many things happening at the same time for us to be able to do anything meaningful. We have come to devalue our own individual contribution because there are so many contributions happening at the same time. We find it nearly impossible to even look at all of the ideas presented, much less distill and evaluate them. Criticality has flown the coop.

If you want to just look at the pictures and read the captions, like you do at the Dentist's Office, OK, but sometime come back and read the hard stuff beginning on the left.



Trees, clouds, inside, outside, endless red brown dirt and the bluest skies ever seen. Everything all at once. And we love it that way.

A high speed bus ride.

Australian Outback

Given this list of visions unique to our time and place, we may be able to get a better grasp on understanding nature by attempting to define what it is not.

Speaking again from the standpoint of a person in an industrialized society, the common perception of nature is something which exists without human intervention. It does not mean that we do not participate with it, rather that it has no inherent need for us. It can function quite well on its own. Nature is everything which has not been constructed by humans and it means we of industrial societies are not part of nature. We might participate with it in various fashions, but we are not part of it. So I am left with the conclusion that nature is whatever is not human or constructed by humans. It is other.

What is the epistemology of nature - how do I understand? It is from the Greek word '*epistandi*' meaning, to stand upon. Epistemology investigates the nature of knowledge to help us know, where we stand.

Even having listed some of the intuitive and empirical visions of this particular moment, perhaps even because of them, I have the responsibility to address nature more analytically. Analysis leads directly to those places whose authority we respect and we find ourselves immediately at the doors of law, religion and science.

Law has surprisingly little to say about nature. Christopher Stone and other attorneys are making significant contributions ('Should Trees Have Standing?' 1974) to the relationship between law and nature and I expect much more to come of this activity in the near future as we are a society who increasingly makes up its mind in legal terms. Law does have a great deal to say about how we behave in relation to property and if we continue to view much of nature as property it may have an increasing amount to say about what constitutes nature. But for the moment, law has the most to say about rights. And it is interesting to note those rights are interpreted differently in different places. In the former Soviet Union they had substantive rights, meaning humans had the right to food, clothing and shelter and it was the obligation of the society to provide those things to all people. There was no discussion about the quality of the food, clothing and shelter provided, simply that every citizen had the right to them and the state had to provide them. By contrast, the United States has procedural rights, where every citizen is given the right to equal opportunity, which means we can chase after pretty much what we want, but there is no guarantee we will ever get it. The common perception about Ameri-

can law indicates it is primarily concerned with control and theoretically establishes the procedures which attempt to guarantee the rights and responsibilities of individuals are unimpeded.

The central problem of law in relation to nature is that while the rights of nature are beginning to be explored by some legal activists, it remains unclear what our legal responsibilities about nature really are.

Religion, on the other hand, is literally a Pandora's box of claims about what constitutes nature and how we are expected to interact with it.

Our collective religious traditions have been more informative influences than providers of solutions to the human/nature dilemma. The Judeo/Christian creation myths present the dynamic conflict between the farmer and the nomad, (Cain and Able). The nomadic life says be fruitful, multiply and subdue the Earth, it also says: shit anywhere you want because you are going to leave. The Farmer's life says care for and tend to nature and it says: don't shit where you eat because you are going to stay there. Clearly, the farmers lost and the nomads won. The dominance of this vision is pointed out in the Jewish 'Feast of Booths' which comes from the grape harvest. It is the farmer's harvest, but it provides food and trade for the nomad and it guarantees the maintenance of the nomadic tradition. Both The Jewish and Christian tradition are anchored in the belief that nature has been given by God to humans for their exclusive use and it presupposes nature has utility in the nurturing and continuance of human life. The tradition has it that there is a 'Great Chain of Being' with humans occupying the highest position on that chain as they were made in God's image and are consequently superior to anything else and have dominion over nature. It believes humans have a special status in the order of 'creation' Some Contemporary Christian theology suggests that God wants us to care for nature by subduing it. This tradition of subjugation still places people above nature.

The Hindu/Buddhist tradition has a farmer based ethic and a cyclic view of the universe. It believes nature is superior to humans and that humans are reasoned while nature is unreasoned. The holy man lifts the scorpion out of the water and it stings him. The scorpion falls in the water and the holy man again, lifts the scorpion out of the water and the scorpion stings him again. It is in the nature of the scorpion to sting and it is in the nature of humans to assist in the preservation of all life. The environmental problems associated with this belief structure are not seen in the Vedas or the Upanishads, but in the streets of Calcutta, in the sheer weight of human and animal population.

Many American Indian religious traditions are a blending of nomadic and farming traditions and often do not accept that humans are separate from nature. While there are many differing positions taken by the various tribal groupings, a relatively accurate generalization is that American Indian communities believe nature is used and serves for human benefit, but one must not kill anything (including plants) gratuitously. What western civilization calls The Enlightenment has led to Romanticism and the attendant glorification of nature and within these movements, whether pantheistic or transcendentalist, God and Nature are seen as the same. While many contemporary conservationists believe this to be in close agreement with American Indian beliefs, many American Indians are tired of being the mascot for middle class white values and see the white interest as simple self-serving nostalgia. One of the questions often asked about the American Indians relation with nature revolves around the fact that they lived on the land for a very long time without making major environmental impact. 'Why was there not more impact? Was it because they lacked the technology? Research into the use and practices of fire indicate they certainly had one very powerful form of technology and used it with care and discretion. The reason for this behavior is apparently based in the idea that they could see no need for doing anything destructive to the environment, not that they lacked the technology to do so.

While these three visions are not inclusive of all world religions, they do exemplify the three major modes of thought, namely: 1. Humans are superior to and above nature. 2. Nature superior to humans. 3. Neither humans nor nature are superior as humans are a part of nature.

Science is third on my authority list and yet I do not find the clear and singular vision I have been taught to expect from science. Instead I find multiple and even conflicting evidence and understandings. What is the logic of nature - what are the patterns we can rely upon?

Paul Shepard says, "The natural world, as actually constituted, is one in which one being lives at the expense of others." He goes on to state "...the fundamental ecological reality: The structure of nature is a sequence of killings."

Ecology, arguably the most mis-used term in contemporary society, has been inserted into the vernacular as though synonymous with nature. The term 'environment' has suffered a similar fate and has come to mean 'everything.' We seem to have forgotten 'ecology' is not a thing or a place, but rather the study of relationships between things. Ecology presents its primary precept

by arguing that diversity contributes to stability. If this statement is intended to be a beacon of natural understanding, a goal as it were, one might logically ask what is the desirability of stability, or put another way what is the value of stability?

The Nobel laureate in biology, Konrad Lorenz, had some very informative ideas on this topic. He quotes his teacher, Professor Burian, "Man's original sin is monoculture." Lorenz, speaking specifically about water pollution, goes on to say, "The stability of an ecosystem is proportional to the number of species that inhabit it. We must make the public aware of the irreversible and irrevocable nature of the pollution of the waters. If we kill a body of water, a body of water as a living system that consists of many species, then we can never make up for this fully."

"Thus the biocenosis becomes poorer and poorer, and it is erroneous to think that man alone will be impervious to this impoverishment and that he alone will survive when all other creatures perish. For this reason, the destruction of a body of water, the murder of a river or a lake is always a step toward the suicide of humanity."

"Research in evolution teaches us that a species can most easily adapt when its degree of specialization is low. A chameleon is dependent on eating moving insects since its specialization is connected with motion. A mouse on the other hand is neither choosy about what it eats or where it lives. Nevertheless, there is a great imbalance between those species that can adapt to changes in their surroundings and those that cannot. One can only name a few animals that can survive when their habitat grows smaller; that is to say, ones that can move into town with us. Most species are certainly unable to adapt as rapidly as the changes in civilization require. However, to look into the future and determine what will exist and what will not is impossible. One cannot foresee a prevailing ecological social structure."

One of the most respected and well reasoned views of the topic of 'structure' comes from Aldo Leopold in his famous "*Sand County Almanac*," where he addresses land as an energy circuit [and] conveys three basic ideas:

1. Land is not merely soil.
2. The native plants and animals kept the energy circuit open; others may or may not.
3. Man-made changes are of a different order than evolutionary changes, and have effects more comprehensive than is intended or foreseen.

The summation of his thoughts are in the final para-

graphs of the book: "The "key log" which must be moved to release the evolutionary process for an ethic is simply this: quit thinking about decent land use as solely and economic problem. Examine each question in terms of what is ethically and esthetically right, as well as what is economically expedient. A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise."

Lorenz, Leopold and the concept of ecology have run into difficulty in being accepted and internalized by the common person, not because they are wrong, but because their ideas are based on the idea of community and the waning years of this century are still championing the individual as the most credible ideal.

We don't believe society cares about the individual person at all. As a matter of fact, we all have memorized examples of how society has demonstrated it doesn't care about anyone. It is not brittle recalcitrance that has sent us into this place, we are just hedging our bets. If society does care for the individual, well, hooray, but just in case it doesn't, it might be valuable to have a little insurance policy. At the present moment, we tend to look out for ourselves. Certainly we have community activities and instincts, even hopes, which drive us to participate in developing an increase in this desire for collective value and value, but most of us, after the town meeting is over, get in our individual cars and drive home, quite alone. At the stoplight, late at night, there are damn few illusions.

The clarity and truth of Lorenz and Leopold has problems penetrating the shield of our consciousness because they spend their time in aquariums and forests and we spend our time in a 'Bladerunner' world. The Land Ethic can make all the sense it wants to but it doesn't make any linkage to urbanity, where we all are.

Leopold, speaking on the idea of 'The Ecological Conscience', says, "No important change in ethics was ever accomplished without an internal change in our intellectual emphasis, loyalties, affections and convictions. The proof that conservation has not yet touched these foundations of conduct lies in the fact that philosophy and religion have not yet heard of it. [1949] In our attempt to make conservation easy, we have made it trivial."

It may have taken nearly fifty years for philosophy and religion to "hear of it" but it has now been heard. We never really doubted Lorenz's biologic accuracy or Leopold's 'Land Ethic, or even the harsh realities of an Ecologist like Shepard. The problem is we don't know what to do with this information and we have internal-

ized the concept that ecological responsibility is a little like a religion. We may believe in that religion, but we are not always good at practicing it. Up to this point, we have been able to get away with being disinterested and disrespectful in the church of nature. We know the priests of science are right. We even trust their supposed disinterest and neutrality more than we do many religious teachers. The center of the problem is we have been lulled into the idea that the future will be a seamless extension of the past.

In looking at the Logic of Nature, the search for patterns we can rely upon, we have been looking the wrong way. We have been looking in the forest and the rivers, we have watched the birds and hoped they held the secrets. The unkept and obvious secret of the birds, is that the problem is with the humans. I am writing this sentence on a computer made primarily of plastics and the process of its construction caused complex polymer chemistry to pollute one of the river valleys of northern California. I don't recall asking for either the computer or the pollution; both were presented to me by a society I cannot change. The more we learn about meteorology and riparian systems, the more we build houses in flood plains. The more we understand about ground water depletion, the more irrigated orchards get planted. The more we learn about aquifer recharge, the more of the land we pave. This is the pattern of nature we can rely upon: We humans will not change unless and until there is a catastrophe.

What are the ethics of nature - how should I behave?

Ethics - the study of the specific moral choices to be made by the individual in their relationship with others. Ethics are inextricably connected to values.

The further we get into this process of trying to understand nature the more we begin to see our concern is essentially philosophical. Aristotle gave us '*Telos*', Thomas Aquinas his '*Suma Contra Gentiles*' and Immanuel Kant presented his '*Lectures on Ethics*', but at some point, we ordinary contemporaries must confront the fact that the problem of value is difficult even for exceedingly thorough modern philosophers like, J. Baird Callicot who states, "The question of ultimate value is a very sticky one." And he believes, "There can be no value apart from an evaluator."

Why does anyone value nature? Values are tools that help us know how to behave. They explain our decisions. So by trying to discover what constitutes nature we have unavoidably had to establish how we believe



One of the most commonly held views of nature is a place that appears to be unsullied by the hand of man. A place where we are (can be) awed by the beauty and majesty of forces larger and more powerful than us.

Loud and powerful puts you in your place. [Maybe.]

Yosemite National Park





The Latin word *primævus* means 'early in life' and gives us *Primeval* and it is how we feel about all forests. Dank, dark, dangerous and forboding are terms we associate with forests, but forests are also where we get the belief that nature consists almost entirely of plants, and green plants at that.

*We like our nature to be green, very green, and in a forest is where the green is the best
Kepler track, South Island, New Zealand*





The Western vision of nature is based in the forest and that vision leaves little room for the idea of the steppe, savannah or desert as constituting anything other than deadly threat. The canopy of the forest or the jungle is where we get our protection. The hot and the flat are where the danger looms.

Often, nature just scares the hell out of us, and it should.

This highway is as straight as possible because we want to get out of here as soon as possible. (Unless you are Navajo and are already home.)

Shiprock, New Mexico
(Navajo - Tsé Bit' Aí - Rock With Wings)

we should behave in relationship to it. If, as a case in point, I use my own perceptions to stand inside Callicot's realm of "evaluator" I must state that my values come from being alive in a particular society at a particular moment in time and that my views are specifically contemporary; and the reason for my concerns about nature are based in self interest and consequently as a contemporary person see little justification for valuing nature for other than anthropocentric reasons. It is, however, important and necessary to look at various and contrasting view points:

The superficial ecologist (Who never wants to be called that and would much prefer the inaccurate title of 'conservationist'.) see themselves as a person who is doing the correct things for the correct reasons. They recycle their newspapers and glass bottles, they buy cars which use unleaded gas, they agonize about 'plastic or paper?' at the grocery stores. In short, they are consumers in a consumer society. They are trying to pay the mortgage and get their kids to piano lessons. They don't have the energy or the interest to do anything different than what they are doing, because it is hard enough just doing that.

The conservationist is convinced we can use something without screwing it up. The idea is to save. It doesn't exclude many activities of humans nor does it pretend to. The forest service is an example of an organization which attempts to use and protect at the same time. The other end of the conservative spectrum is represented by 'The Nature Conservancy' who has the wisdom to understand the only way you control and protect anything in a capitalistic society is to own it. And land ownership is their tool for conservation.

The preservationist is a label often confused with conservationist and yet is dynamically different as was demonstrated by the enormity of the rift between John Muir (preservationist) and Gifford Pinchot (conservationist) in their battle over the Hetch-Hetchy valley. The preservationist believes in wilderness for its own sake and will do anything to assure the continuation of that wildness. The preserve part of preservation to them means 'intact.'

The deep ecologists see it as inappropriate for humans to discuss the value of nature. They say humans are separate from nature and that nature doesn't care. I find this approach both truthful and impossibly impractical. Yes, western science has corrupted us all and economics is a form of brain damage. The Earth may have moral status on its own. But I live here too, and my values are part of this place. The Earth First! people

and Edward Abbey would say that is exactly the problem, too many people. Deep ecologists are here championing the rights of nature as separate and autonomous and believe if we humans are going to be allowed to continue to be here then everything we do must be considered in relation to nature. If it is not a religion, it is at least an entire philosophy whose epistles and treatises are still being written and argued about.

The bio-centrists view humans as part of the Earth's biosphere that they see as a complex web of interconnected organisms objects and events. Some bio-centrists subscribe to 'The Gaia hypothesis' (A theory presented by the atmospheric scientist James Lovelock, who believes the Earth behaves like a single organism.)

Eco-centrism is related to bio-centrism but appears to be in favor of swinging the pendulum to plants and animals and away from humans. They assert the 'purpose' of nature is for it to flourish.

The eco-feminist presents the thesis that our problems with the natural world are a result of insensitive ineptitude on the part of male decision makers. They contend the (attributed) male characteristics of linear logic and rational procedural sequence and aggression toward nature is a result of male domination of western culture. If humans are going to improve their relationship with the natural world women will have to become in charge of policies that cause changes in processes and decisions about what constitutes environmental quality.

The animal liberationist and *ecocentrist* positions are presented simultaneously by the views of Tom Regan who believes in: 1. the total abolition of the use of animals in science. 2. the total dissolution of commercial animal agriculture. 3. the total elimination of commercial and sport hunting and trapping. He also believes what would be good for the Earth is a decrease in human population and that nature has no interests. What he does admit is we have, indeed, multiplied and subdued the Earth and although that statement is from the Christian tradition, it is obvious the religious traditions of many cultures were founded when the world was a very different place and their population policies continue as though nothing had changed. When one begins to understand the complexity of establishing the moral rights of anything in addition to humans, it becomes relatively obvious that our population must now be managed in a way it never has been managed in the past. The ecocentrists understand that ethical values have always been anthropocentric not ecocentric and the reasons for ecocentrism are ultimately anthropocentric.

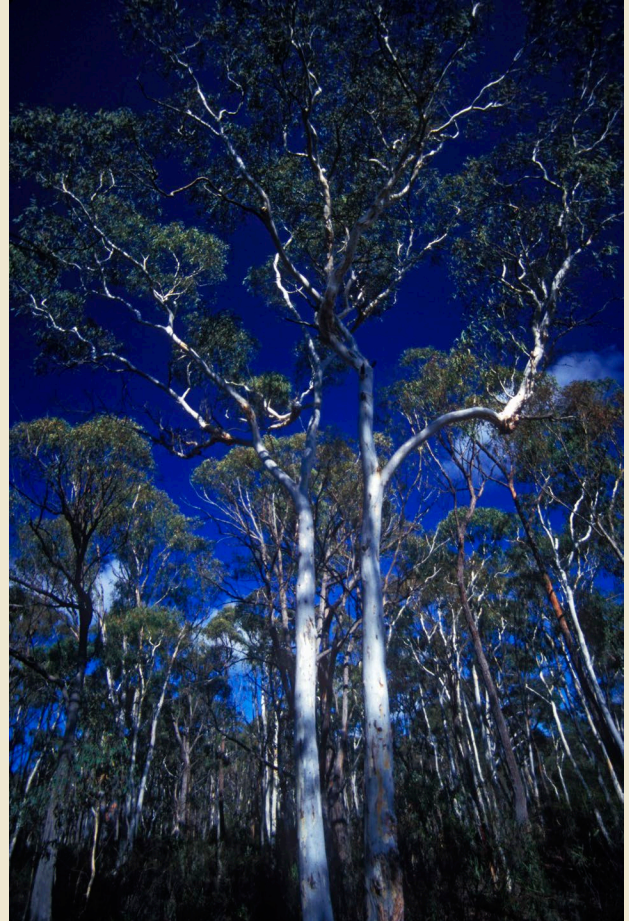
Once we get beyond the point of introductory statements of beliefs of the various groups, conflicting statements and interests begin to occur. 'The area of 'Rights' and 'Moral Standing' have shown themselves to be particularly contentious issues once we begin to recognize the philosophical existence of other beings as other than objects for human use.

Let us suppose, just for a moment the animal rights activists were able to convince the cattle industry of the folly of their ways. What then? These animals have been domesticated to the point they must be fed. Do we let them starve in their newly found freedom? I know we have plenty of efficient plant protein to go around, but what, exactly, is it that happens to the chicken farms? They exist, now what is it we are physically going to do with or about them? We could feed them until they die in captivity, but it would be a violation of their newly declared rights. Or we could let them out of their cages. And then what happens?

There appears to be a conflict between animal liberation and environmental ethics. It is most clearly pointed out by Mark Sagoff who states: "An environmentalist cannot be an animal liberationist; nor may animal liberationists be environmentalists. The environmentalist would sacrifice the welfare of individual creatures to preserve the authenticity, integrity, and complexity of ecological systems. The liberationist must be willing to sacrifice the authenticity, integrity and complexity of ecosystems for the welfare of animals."

To make things even more complex, J. Baird Callicot presents the idea of humans universally becoming vegetarians being, "tantamount to a shift of trophic shift niche from omnivore with carnivorous preferences to herbivore. This shift would, "...increase available food resources for human beings. The human population, as past trends overwhelmingly suggest, expand in accordance with the potential thus afforded. The net result would be fewer non-human beings and more human beings, who, of course, have requirements for life far more elaborate than even those of domestic animals, requirements which would tax other "natural resources" (trees for shelter, minerals mined at the expense of topsoil and its vegetation, etc.) more than under present circumstances. A vegetarian human population is therefore probably ecologically catastrophic."

This type of ideological conflict is predictable in the light of conflicting information and lack of certainty. Mr. Callicot does not figure into his equation the problem associated with cattle producing digestive gas that has significant implications on air pollution and ozone layer destruction. Nor does he factor in the realization that land formerly used for cattle production could be



*Ghost Gums (Eucalyptus)
Australian Outback*

Eco-centrist want nature to flourish, but the position doesn't come to grips with the question:

What about me?

What about me?

What about me?

I truly like and respect plants and animals and rocks and weather and all the rest, but **am I not part of nature flourishing?**

What about *me?*

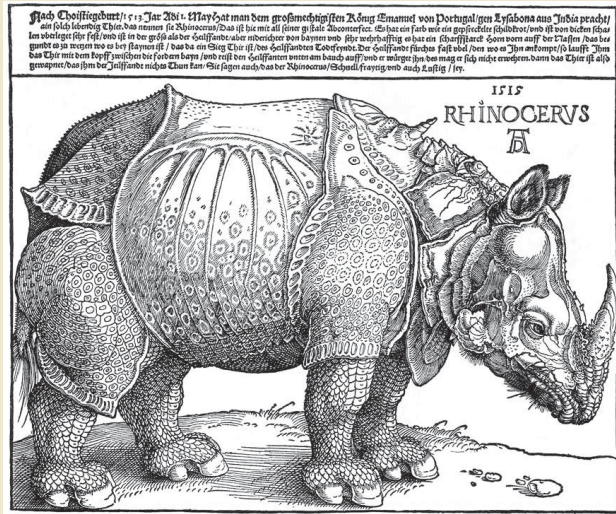
used for the production of forests in addition to becoming fields of human food. The person making the case for saving forests by mentioning that trees produce Oxygen for us to breath hardly ever mentions that most of the oxygen produced in our atmosphere does not come from the forests, but from the ocean, from sea algae. Comparing and contrasting ideologies is the arena which is the most confusing because the ground shifts according to which camp one resides in at a given moment.

The screw-up is a stance often left off of the lists enumerating philosophical positions. It is actually composed of two positions that are often unfairly lumped together with *'The bastards'*. It is a position taken by a great many people and I am surprised it has been ignored for so long. *The screw-up* does not have a true position as oblivion is their natural state. They are not even aware enough to be presumptuous and no mater what ethical posture is the excepted norm of the time, it will be overlooked by these people. They are care-less. In previous, less politically correct times, they were appropriately called morons and they still are, and they are out in force. They believe what they do has no impact on anything. They think that whatever they do doesn't make any difference, but there are so many of them that what they do makes an enormous difference. They perceive themselves disenfranchised, often are, and they are convinced they will stay in that position forever. They are unaware of the consequences of their actions and whatever harmful actions they produce is out of ignorance and stupidity. They have considerable ability to cover ignorance with arrogance and their position is a particularly viscous form of sloth.

The bastards are an entirely different matter. They are not indifferent and incompetent, they are spiteful. They will assert their presence at every possible opportunity and have axes to grind that they know are irrelevant and stupid. They are [by an odd turn of phrase,] by nature, contrary to any sense of common purpose. They are unable to discern the difference between habit and tradition and use tradition as a method of covering up the fact that they have no logical reason for being assertive. Most commonly found in bureaucracies, they see their purpose in obstruction and obfuscation. Seemingly incapable of honestly listening or evaluating an alternative position, they are convinced their method is the only correct one and as though they were genetically incapable of change, they refuse to admit they were or are ever wrong about anything. Avaricious self-interest are their watchwords. They have the tenacity of Moray eels and present dogma in place of thought. If the data banks of census bureau had this category we would be overwhelmed by the statistics.

Natural law theory, natural rights theory and utilitarianism are the three major realms of western ethical theory. (Most clearly presented by Donald Van DeVeer and

Christine Pierce in their philosophical anthology "People Penguins, and Plastic Trees. Wadsworth publishing, 1986.) While we have looked at some variations of the first two, utilitarianism is usually the place where the bulk of the battles are fought in western societies. Cost-benefit



analysis a primary technique for establishing utility and it is an uncomfortable topic to many who are concerned with environmental quality because it uses tools which are in the realm of the economist, but more importantly it presumes identifiable utility to everything and that utility can be identified and measured in relationship to dollar standards. The codification and 'measurement' of the benefits eventually slides into subjective and indefensible areas. (Steven Kelman has made notable contributions to this dialogue.)

When considering cost-benefit analysis it is difficult to agree with the politicians, scientists and economists who view nature as a commodity or even a service. In Paris, standing in front of the Musée d' Orsay, is an anatomically accurate bronze statue of a *rhinoceros*.

What its purpose for being there is probably relevant in the curatorial minds of art historians but is unknown to everyone else. Long before a real rhinoceros was ever imported to Europe, *Albrecht Dürer* was asked to make a drawing of this newly discovered beast. The only source of information he had to work from was the written notes of African explorers who had actually seen a Rhinoceros. His genius allowed him to draw what he thought was the idea of what a rhinoceros might be. His final engraving was widely published and much of Europe was astonished at the visual qualities of this amazing creature. Durer certainly did his best, but the Rhino ended up with a full suit of riveted, bolted metal armor and all manor of imagined bumps, gew-gaws and an extra horn. It is a beautiful re-presentation of the idea of a rhino, but his rhino ultimately fails us is because Dürer was trying to use his drawing to demonstrate the benefit derived from the cost

of the expeditions, to use reason to give value to something as unreasonable as the existence of a rhinoceros.

Nature is unreasonable and we humans are one of the most powerful and unreasonable part of it. We poke around in nature, we make changes to things and we assert our needs. We do unreasonable things individually and collectively. No matter how much I despise the Forest Service for treating our forest heritage as an artificially subsidized crop, they will continue to reside inside the department of Agriculture. And unless the whole nation gets upset about how the Forest Service has been pissing away our collective heritage with a policy of 'the greatest use for the greatest number', there is little potential for change. Anyone who believes otherwise has never been to a meeting of a local 'county board of supervisors' to witness our governmental cost-benefit policies in action.

The illusions of cost benefit analysis were most poetically presented as long ago as 1964 by Thomas Merton: "Let me say this before rain becomes a utility that they can plan and distribute for money. By 'they' I mean the people who cannot understand that rain is a festival, who do not appreciate its gratuity, who think that what has no price has no value, that what cannot be sold is not real, so that the only way to make something actual is to place it on the market. The time will come when they will sell you even your rain.

At the moment rain is still free, and I am in it. I celebrate its gratuity and its meaninglessness."

It is historically naive to view the world other than a garden because we have treated it as such since the beginning of agriculture. The problem is not with the garden rather it is with the gardeners. We work in our gardens and we value their productivity. The value civilization places on nature is proportional to how bad non-nature is. At the moment, our cities and all our non-nature is pretty horrid. Consequently, the value of nature is increasing and I would think nature will soon become the most valuable thing of all.

At the risk of stating the obvious, I believe the natural world is in trouble. It is seriously out of balance. And by now it is obvious to everyone in developed countries. Even though it would probably be good and feel good to dedicate more time and energy to conservation, preservation and restoration. However, the problem is now rather far removed from simple good deeds. The developing countries will continue on their present paths as long as their economies can afford to pay for unemployment. After that point is passed, the rules of the game will change. When the cost of food increases to the point where agricultural workers receive the same rates or higher than factory workers, we could easily see a depopulation of our cities. But between now and then, the population bomb is hurtling toward us at a rate

which makes Robert Malthus look fairly intelligent after all. (The net human population increase is one-quarter million per day.)

The concept of developing countries could turn out to be an illusion. I could be building walls in the river of my ethics, but If I look at the present global condition from the stance of a natural scientist I might easily come to the conclusion that humans are the will of nature. In Aristotelian terms, we could be the Telos, the end product, the purpose of nature. We have proven ourselves to be the end of the food chain. Since that is the case, is there anything to discount the idea that we are also the end of the line? We have not behaved biologically. We have a population size billions beyond the size of our niche in the realm of mammals. We, unlike most species, have had nearly endless wars, vile plagues have often had their way with us, and yet nothing has killed us off, or even modified our behavior patterns. What, for example, prevents us from collectively demanding our religious leaders to change their population policies? Is it not obvious by this time that more is not better for anyone? We have continually increased. If indeed, humans are the will of nature, then either we clean up our collective act or we go down the drain of specie extinction. At the moment, there is no clear evidence we have either the interest or capacity to clean up anything.

As much as I despise the despoilers of the natural environment I cannot pledge allegiance to the ecocentric cause because they assume an arrogance of theological omniscience. (They think they know how nature is supposed to work.) Consequently, I am left with an exceedingly traditional approach to the controversy and suggest that prudence and long term thinking are our most viable option.

We should fear nature because the consequences are huge. We should assume ignorance and be very conservative in our actions because we know so little about what the natural order is supposed to be. In the course of being concerned with the welfare of life on the planet, I discover the reason I have the concern is because I am able to perceive the world and consequently the source of my feelings is myself. I would like life to be better for all things in the world because it would, in addition to making it a better place, it would also make me feel better. Some place down near the core I must admit I find no other reason for having these feelings about environmental quality than pure, unbridled self-interest. I am anthropocentric. I am responsible for my actions and yes, want a future for my children and everyone else's children too. I want the natural world to be important to everyone and for everyone to realize there are, indeed, limits, but I can't pretend I think a tree cares if it is rotting into compost or is used to make a coffee table. I am the one who cares about the tree, not the other way around.

GREEN

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*Gum Drop Trees. (Probably Yews) Is this gardening or is it just clipping?
Painswick, Gloucestershire, England*





Eugene Atget spent much of his life photographing Paris. In 1911, while standing on a path in Parc Monceau, he took the photo of the tree on the left.

Eighty-five years later, in 1996, the same tree was found (above) to be alive and flourishing. Somebody cares quite a lot about this tree and has been taking care of this tree for a very long time. My guess is that the caretakers are the citizens of Paris.



Seen here in 2003, on the West Side of Manhattan, *The Highline Rail* network was a two and a half mile long cast off from an earlier manufacturing era. Twenty six feet above the street level, it became a dumping ground and remained derelict for half a century before the City of New York did anything about it.



Taking the lead from an earlier project in Paris (Viaduct des Arts) and with design led by James Corner at *Field Operations* the *High Line* (seen here in a summer downpour) has become a vibrant garden park and verdant stripe in the city sky. Gardens are a difficult municipal responsibility.



Having abandoned Thoreau's quiet meditation on nature, we are now pacified, even content, with pretending we have seen the natural world by merely going past it. The tourist mantra is, "We've seen it, let's go."

*Ayers Rock (Uluru) in Kata Juta National Park, seen from a tourist bus
Northern Territory, Australia*



Our passion for what is left of the natural world has developed extreme sport as an industry with irony as an offshoot. It is no longer cool enough to do something merely dangerous, it must be “*extreme*” to qualify. Something ridiculously difficult and life threatening. Why would you go skiing when you can jump off a cliff wearing a squirrel suit and the now ubiquitous video-camera-on-the-helmet?

This is a poster inside a very urban building in San Francisco. It demonstrates an extreme sport most people will only perceive on a video and yet it attempts to persuade us that we need the same clothing to protect us ordinary folk. The adjacent alleyway is very real. The poster makes our relationship with nature merely vicarious.



In 1990, Kilauea Volcano erased this beach and the surrounding rain forest and 200 homes with fifty feet of lava. No one seemed to know why the palm trees were cut. The surfer was only interested in the next wave.

*Kalapana Beach (now called Kaimu),
Big Island, Hawaii*



These bushes and sand mounds are part of an artist project to make a 'Braille Garden.' The intent was to walk along the beach and feel the bushes in the same way a blind person would read a giant Braille word. The word it spells is "schatzen," to care for, to respect. It refers to the adjacent estuary where life begins. Most of us would see this place as a mud flat and hence be blind to it being called a garden.

*The light stripes are caused by passing ships, near the mouth of the Elbe River
Cuxhaven, Germany*



Boundless, exuberant and even out of bounds is the motion of youth and tells us that nature, like our energy is without limits.

Redhead in a hurry.
Doolin, County Clare, Ireland



The activities of animal husbandry demand pasturage and so the sheltering forest disappears. The idea of protection shifts from that of fences and walls to one of distance. You can see your enemy coming from a long way off.

*Sheep pasture and solo farm house
Isle of Skye, (Eilean a' Cheò), Scotland*



In the single-family dwelling, the new-found exterior spaces are often merely leftovers marking the edge of the property and filled with all manner of random and unrelated activities. Entertaining and drying laundry are common, but the real reason is to separate from neighbors. This desire for distance is the reason we abandon apartments for single-family homes. What we do with this space rarely becomes an elaborate or even moderately interesting garden.

*Pampas grass decorating the corner of the backyard. Drying laundry next to the septic tank, next door to the river.
Firth of Fourth, Scotland*



We seem compelled to decorate the left over space between our houses and the street with all manner of unusual and bizarre items with no other purpose than to announce that we are different from our neighbors. Any other purpose for placing a statue like this on your front lawn remains lost and should perhaps stay hidden.

*Statue with dried flowers.
Suburban home, Copenhagen, Denmark*



The remaining ruins of medieval Cistercian monasticism are now stones and grass. Victims of the Black Death and politics The Abbey is now a historical site, but also a tourist park. In the public imagination parks are always confused with gardens.

*Fountains Abby
Studley Royal, Yorkshire, England*



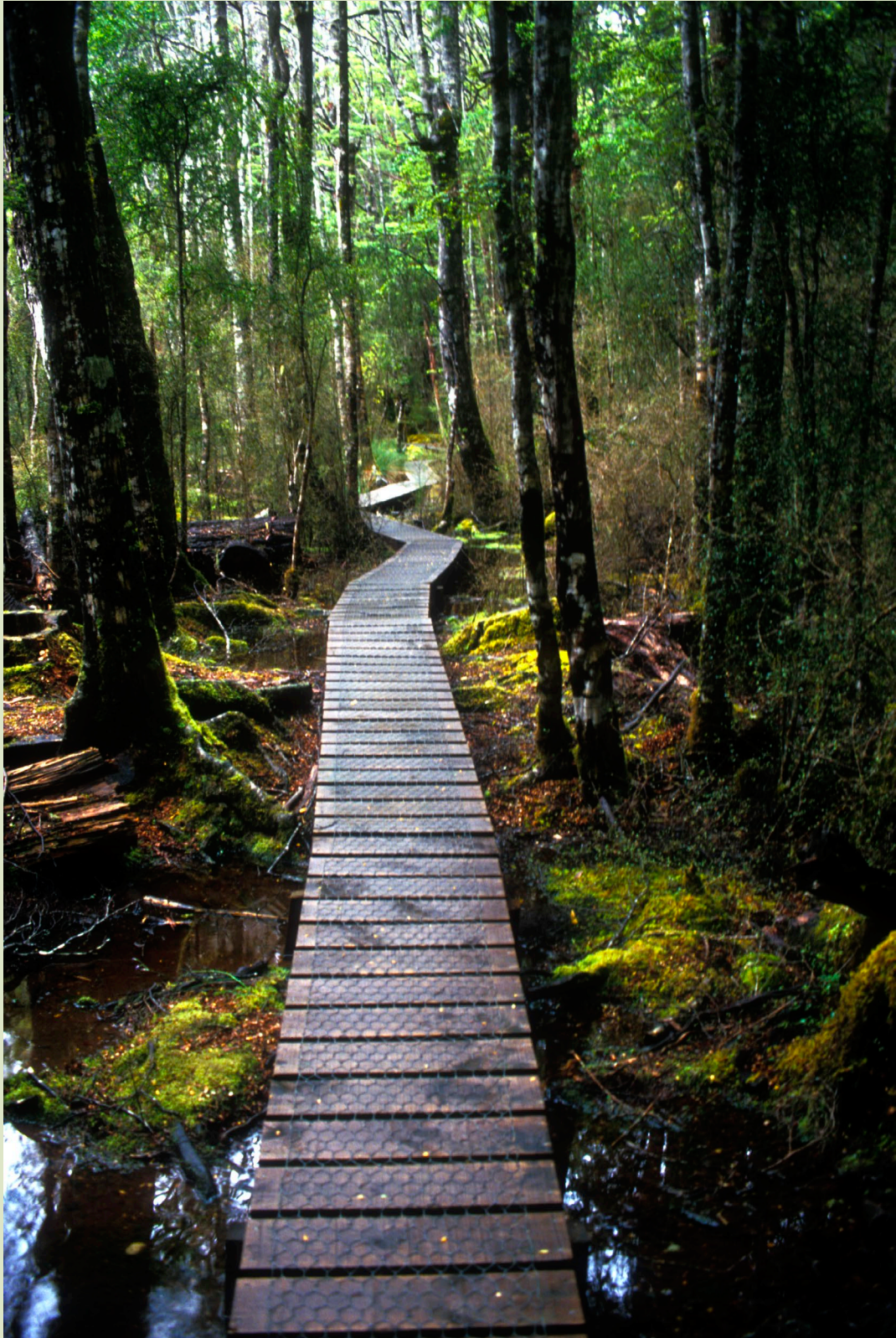
Even the most awful, horrific place can seem park-like, even gardenesque, if there is enough green grass and blue sky. The most important thing is the green grass, really green.

*Berkenau Concentration camp
Oswiecim, Poland*



Of course Paradise is a garden. Para-daza. A walled, (irrigated) place that kept the desert at bay.
Hell is the dryness, the arid places here on earth. Heaven is green and lush.

*View from the post office parking lot.
Hanalei, Hawaii*



Instead of wild, untrammled and dangerous nature the great mass of people would rather have a guide through (unknown) nature. A path is at least focused in direction and will do in place of a real guide. Going it alone presupposes we know what we are doing.

*The Kepler Track,
South Island, New Zealand*



These tea-trees are thought of as an invasive and non-indigenous species by some and sacred and diminishing by others. To many, a view like this is uninviting and fearful because in this scene there is no obvious place for humans.

Melaleuca swamp forest
North Island, New Zealand



Aside from the fact there are no beaches, vineyards or mountains, many would associate this image with a long ago vanished vision of California as Eden.

A little scrutiny reveals a much more complicated picture. The leaning fence indicates the dairy farmer cut through the hillside long ago. The citrus tree is the only one left as the rest of the orchard died out. The power line crosses the property bringing electricity to someplace else. The mustard has the legend of being delivered by the Spanish Missionaries, but more likely came as windblown seed from the nearby freeway. The lone bird is a Turkey Buzzard, not a Red-tailed Hawk.

Still somewhat rural, California



The bottom lands are where the tillage starts and the hillsides are left to pasturage. The Spanish missionaries brought the idea of organized nature to California. Putting plants in repetitive rows produced a greater likelihood of dependable harvest. We continually confuse agriculture with garden.

*Alfalfa fields with riparian Sycamores and Oaks.
Arroyo Grande, California*




Illusions about nature seem limitless. Even the skewed vision in this infrared photograph becomes acceptable because we see things we expect from the natural world. In the case of this image, we are wrong on all counts. The wheat growing in precise rows was only possible after machine planting and irrigation started in the 19th century. The forest has been replanted after it was cut down for firewood during World War Two and the rainbow was made by irrigation sprinklers.

There is a reason
a lawn

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is

not ~~even close~~
to

garden



In recent years lawns have fallen out of favor because of the water they use and the work they require. If we didn't have to take care of them and if the water didn't cost anything, then we would probably love them as much as we did in the nineteen fifties.

The *green carpet* is something we associate with the fecundity and repetition of agriculture and the promise of a bountiful harvest. We also associate lawns with wealth and it is a hangover from earlier eras. Gardens may have lawns in them, but a lawn in itself, is not a garden. The magazines called, "Lawn and Garden," "Better Homes and Gardens," all demonstrate with their titles the distinction between lawns and gardens, but because we have our green fetish, lawns will probably be around forever. A lawn is a single color.

A garden is a full pallet of possibilities.



It is strange that some of our most persistent myths about the garden come from agriculture. The kitchen garden is what we eat from, even if we farm for others. The cornucopia not only provides for us but we see it as beautiful. We might see it as beautiful *because* it provides for us.

*Unplanted, totally volunteer, poppies flank a plowed field soon to be planted in wheat.
Oise river valley, France*



The predictability of agricultural plants are also their major problem. A single field of wheat can be thought of as small scale mono culture and hence whatever affects a wheat plant becomes the problem of the adjacent wheat plant as well.

Oise river valley, France



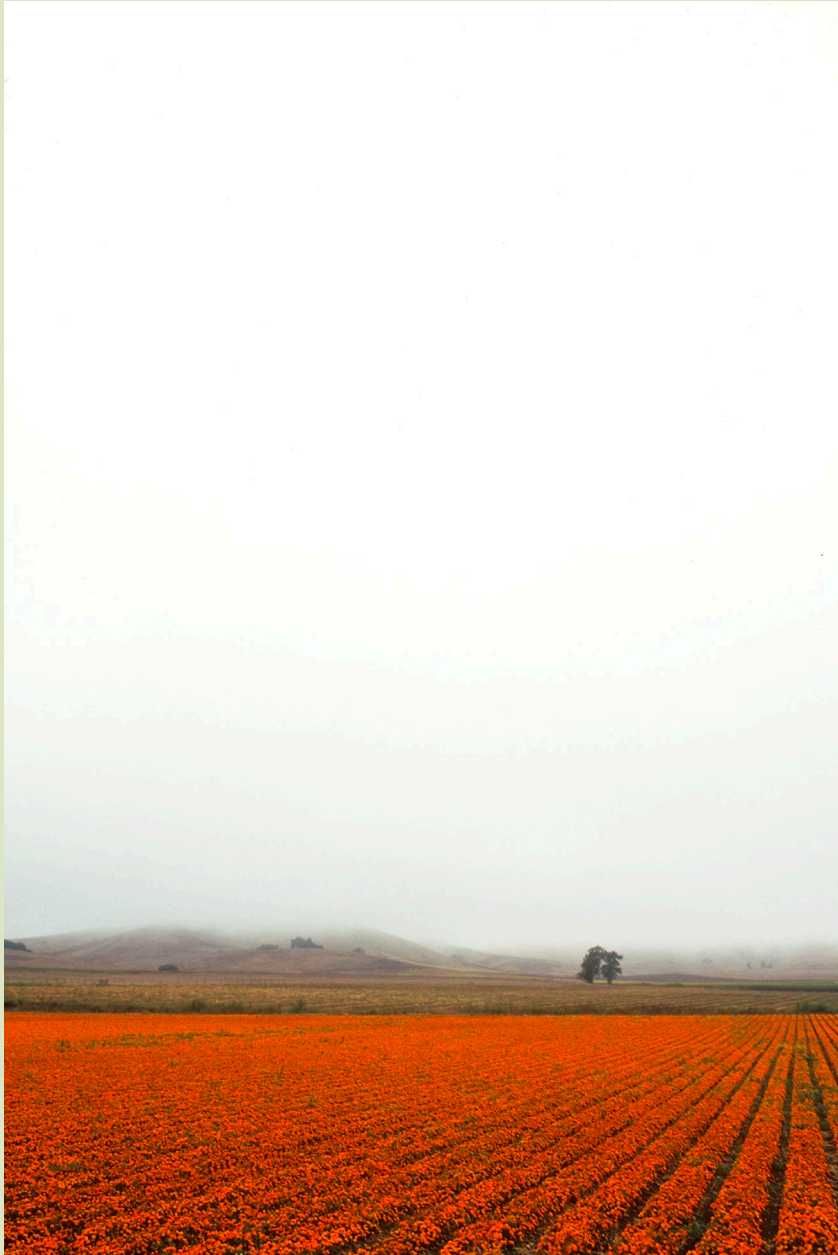
Too much of this and not enough of that has led to agricultural extremes and for gardens to be planted in locations that require enormous amounts of maintenance and nurturance to survive. To be able to drink a glass of wine at sunset from these arid and bird threatened (netted) vineyards required vast amounts of energy and effort unnecessary in wetter regions.

Shandon, California



No one is quite sure if agriculture is an extension of the garden or the other way around. They are a bit like distant relatives with uncomfortable relationships. Most often there is a barrier between the two. As though they have stopped talking because of some argument, long ago.

*Private residential back yard lawn and garden and the annoying neighbors field.
Avebury Plain, England*



Late summer Marigolds slam the eye like a hot iron slab. Fields of flowers like this convince us that gardens and agriculture are the same, because this is a row crop grown for seed and it is beautiful. We get both at once. Even though flowers don't fill our stomachs, they seem to fill our eyes as much we are willing to forgive them. They provide visual sustenance and also hope.

Los Osos Valley, California



Irrigation, like adrenaline, is fabulous for getting things going, but difficult to sustain. The water to irrigate this vineyard came not from local aquifers, but from an enormous aqueduct system bringing water from hundreds of miles away and taken away from local usage. Water is already the war in California. Water will be the war in other places soon.

*Vineyards growing Cabernet and Sauvignon Blanc
Creston, California*



Our relationship with flowers is somewhat similar to our relationship with dogs. We expect their exuberance, we nurture them and are delighted with their youth and presence. And we are saddened with their short lives and early passing.

Jardin des Plantes, Paris



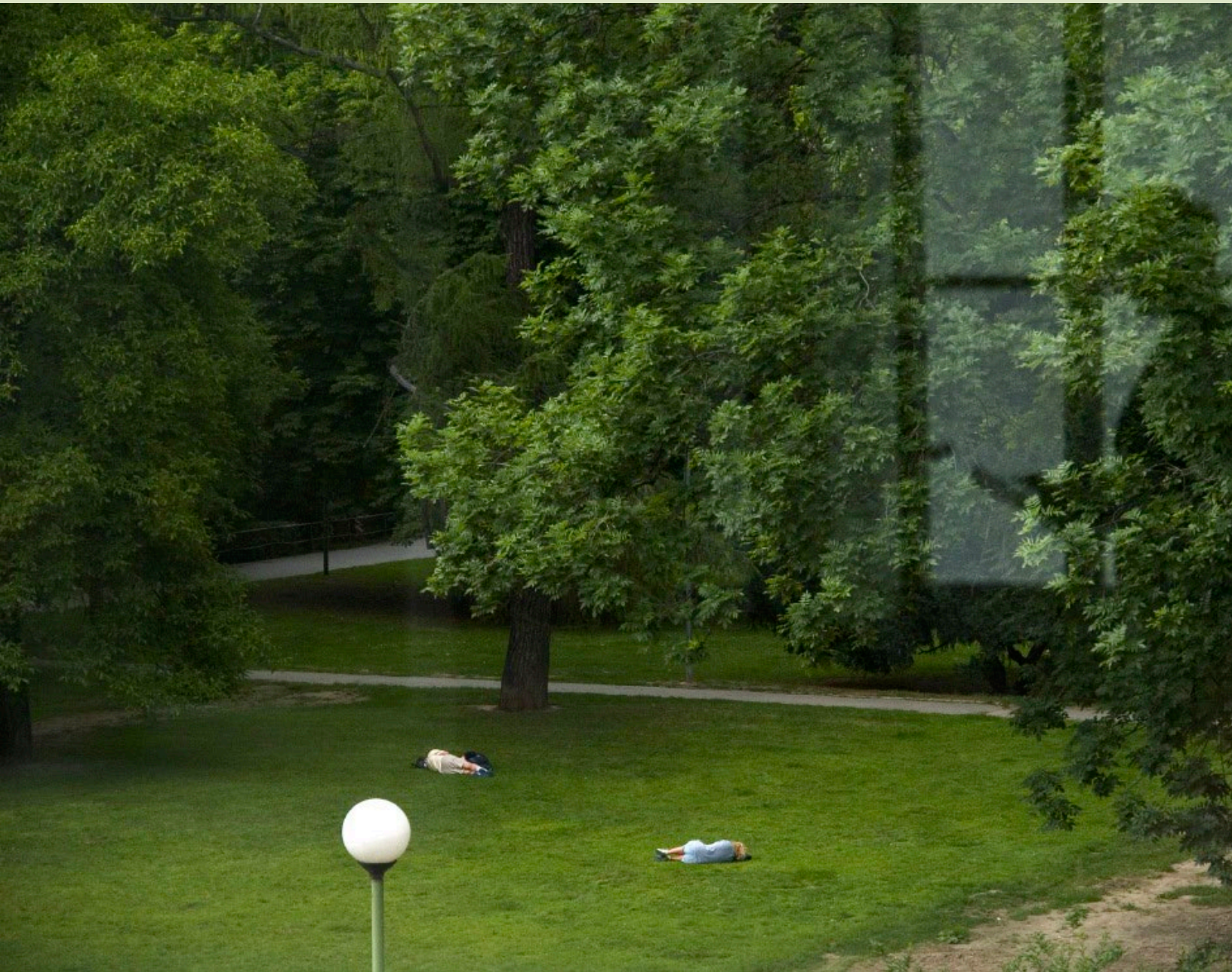
We think of flowers the way we think of Aspirin. If one is good then fifty must be much better. A single blossom might be elegant, but gardeners speak of “masses,” of flowers. Bunches of flowers, beds of flowers. Lots and lots of flowers. They are precious as individuals, but powerful in groups.

Jardin des Plants, Paris



Frantic gardening. This hanging garden nearly obscures the entire front of the house. The residents of this region spend much of the year in the grey, wet, and cold. And when the opportunity for warmth and greenery happen, they do everything possible to celebrate that brief and encouraging moment.

Bergen, Norway



Participation is the word nagging in the background of all our ideas about nature and gardens. Are they things we can simply watch? Are we only green voyeurs? Some people never think about these things and respond autonomically and become part of the place. Whether falling asleep in the sunshine or looking at a park through the window, we love being near evidence of the vitality of things botanic.

Prague, Czech Republic



When the animals stand at the edge of the forest and look out on the plains it is because the forest provides refuge and the plains provide prospect. We do the same thing when we sit in our safe little houses and look out at nature.

MacDowell Colony, Peterborough, New Hampshire



When we want to exert power over nature, we make a garden. When we sit inside our villa and look out at our garden we are looking at the extension of ourselves. Looking at nature has nothing to do with it.

Menaggio, Italy

BORDERS

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Boundaries and edges are ideas equally applied to agriculture and to gardens. The first marks made by humans with a stick in the dirt may have been to mark a path, but they might just as easily have been to divide territories. This is mine, and that is yours. Hedgerows like this one are so complex in their structure they often contain over a hundred species of plants. It is certainly elaborate, but it is still a separator, a line in the dirt.

Cashel, Ireland



Edges are about establishing distinction. A picture frame separates an image from the wall and announces: *This, is what I want you to pay attention to, not that.* Segregating is the only way we establish understanding. The letter G is not the same as the letter Q because we see their boundaries as being different.

Establishing edges is the first step in establishing recognition. When the cardboard was removed, we noticed where it had been because the edges were established when flour was sprinkled around. Now we see a rectangle. Before, all the dirt was the same.

Seattle, Washington



It is difficult to decide if this is an object of pity or an object of adoration. The frame is so much bigger than the object, it makes the singular plant look puny. The establishment of context is essential to understanding what is outside as well as inside the frame.

Bath, England



Was this a good idea gone bad, or something stupid to begin with? Is it a failed attempt at a garden plot, stones attempting to decorate where a tree was supposed to grow, or an inability to repave the place? Regardless, it makes a collision of mistakes announced by differences. And by the way, what is that red thing in the background?

Roerto, Italy



This is three-quarters of a fence. An unfinished boundary. Humorous, because we assume it is supposed to be closed and wonder why it is left undone. This can't be a garden because it is not enclosed.

*This photograph was taken standing next to the stone supposedly able to impart, "the ability to deceive without offending."
Bilarny, Ireland*



Some of gardening is about anticipation and waiting. Most of gardening is about wishful thinking. Wonder and optimism glide hand in hand with the continual desire to see the seasons continue endlessly into the future. The more miserable the climate, the more fervent this desire.

Bath, England



The word *'fence'* comes to us from *'defence'* and means *against* something or some one. We only think of fences in terms of keeping. This is mine, that's yours, keep your dogs out of my garden. This fence keeps my cattle in. You stay out. Don't fence me in. Nature seems to have different ideas about boundaries than do most humans,

*Property boundary fence
Pismo Beach, California*



There are thousands of islands in this archipelago. Some are so arid they used them to practice for the moon landings. These stone fences were not made to keep something in or out, they were made to clear the rocks and plant on what meager soil there was.

Americans carry limitless nostalgia for the stone walls of New England without realizing beauty had nothing to do with dragging stones out of the fields every spring because winter frost had heaved new stones up in front of the plow.

Hvar, Croatia



Fencing has been symbolic, protective and decorative almost from the beginning. Picket fencing evolved from wanting to keep small things in or out and using the least material. Here the arborvitae hedge indulges the decoration of the fence while doing the real protection. Tom Sawyer would have a tough time with this one.

Melbourne, Australia



This semi-public park (what a term!) has a very has wonderful follies. Decorative nonsense that make the place really lovable. This colonnade is simply something at the end of the lake, but it is a fence separating a walkway from the lake. Small scale architecture looking like a Greek or Roman ruin while playing at being a picket fence.

Parc Monceau
8th Arrondissement, Paris



Fencing can be implied or have so much decorative power we forget it is really just a series of things meant to separate us from something else. It is a bit of a stretch to call these wonderful statues a fence, but even before you know any details about the statues, you know they announce the edge between the water and the land.

*Canopus, Hadrian's Villa
Tivoli, Italy*



These Plane trees (platanus) were planted here to make shade for the mules and horses pulling the barges on the canal, but the effect is still a fence. It is an edge that can be seen and read for miles.

*Canal de Crillon
Chateaurenard, France*



Pantheistic Romans thought about statues the way we think about Aspirin. (I said this before about flowers and it is true here as well.) If one is good then a whole bunch must be great. It is OK, because when you run out of room you can build a wall (big fence) and make niches deep enough to hold more statues. Much of the idea of 'Garden,' is about groups or collections of things.

*Near the baths, Hadrian's Villa
Tivoli, Italy*



Water has been almost as important to gardens as plants. Of course, the plants need water, but water also has had a visual presence in gardens since the beginning. Water has always been a boundary.

*Villa Farnese
Caprarolo, Italy*

WELL

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This water has a calming effect on almost everything. The flatness, the extent and reflectivity are practically numbing. At the least, there is a real invitation to sit down and pause.

Stourhead House
Stourton, Wiltshire, England



Fences can be a form of guardrail, but when they are crafted this beautifully almost no one cares that this fence is a safety device.

*Villa Farnese
Caprarolo, Italy*



If you have lots of money you can have lots of water in your gardens. Abalone shells decorate the perimeter of this pool. Obviously not intended for swimming, but the color of the water says there is need for maintenance.

Lotusland
Montecito, California



The color of water tells us the stories we have already told ourselves. Clarity, movement, shine, turbulence. We expect a lot from water and it is because it is part of us. It is the most precise separator of earth and sky. It seems impossible but the printed color of this lake is true and accurate. It is flat and non-reflective because it is loaded with glacial silt (flour) from the Southern Alps.

*Lake Pukaki,
South Island, New Zealand*



The serenity water provides in a garden is often associated with wealth and grand estates of another time, and yet, little puddles in the gutter still fascinate children and even adults, if they take the trouble to look. Green is great but green with wet is the greatest.

Stourhead House
Stourton, Wiltshire, England



Here is the whole catastrophe. Everything at once and in what seems to be a water garden. The average depth of San Francisco Bay is ten feet. In spite of its reputation on tourist posters, it is really only a puddle. A lot of people are trying to take care of it, but when you get your tires changed try to remember that 40,000 tons of rubber from those tires washes into the bay each year. No one fishes in the South Bay any more.

*Salt ponds, corporate buildings, shipping, yachting, housing, and an estuary.
South San Francisco Bay*



Most garden fountains simply die for lack of maintenance. Water requires more tending than plants because plumbing, either leaks or it doesn't. There is no margin. We clean up gardens the way we paint a house. It won't last long, but maybe it will last long enough. Gardens almost never look the way we think they should.

*Pegasus Fountain, Villa Farnese
Caprarolo, Italy*



Water in gardens and especially in cities and plazas seem evidence of civic pride or the ultimate in flamboyance and hubris. Long ago this pond and island were the scene of stupendous displays and theatrics for the enjoyment of the Emperor and his retinue.

*Circus, Hadrian's Villa
Tivoli, Italy*



Water in the garden plays many roles. It shows us the sky when we are not looking for it. And because the sky is the darkest overhead, reflections have more density. This image is intentionally upside down because it looks better that way. Reflections have a way of turning us around.

*Villa Lante,
Bagnaia, Italy*



All the water, in every garden, is an attempt to recall something from our deep amphibious past. Moving water is arguably the most calming of all noises. It is what Chopin was probably searching for when he wrote his 'Nocturnes.' Not making the sound of running water, but producing the same result.

*Yosemite National Park
California*



Broken slate as a ground cover around a collection of cactus lets us know a theater set designer was involved here rather than a desert ecologist. Cacti and succulents are plants we don't seem to know what to do with. Their spiky danger makes us set them apart. They become objects, things seldom relating to the surroundings because they are so often out of context. The desert is the antithesis of the dominant European idea of the garden.

Lotusland
Montecito, California



“I have set this portion of my courtyard to display my collection of Cactus. Aren’t they lovely?” No, in fact, they look like bad children, told to line up and be quiet. This is just left over space decorated with plants because nothing else came to mind. It was just easy.

*Cactus (Garden?) Former Villa, now a cluster of shops
Arequipa, Peru*



When desert water comes in the form of snow it often sublimates into the air and barely moistens the plants. The water only licks the land or runs off, as if to tease, never promising to satisfy. This is a powerful and memorable place. Enormous forms and infinite sky. It is wonderful in its own way, but it is not a green garden.

*Volcanic rill
Shiprock, New Mexico*



(Almost) The closest we ever get to gardens in arid regions is agriculture. Agriculture because of irrigation and like the Anasazi, the agriculture will disappear as soon as the water goes away. The real garden here is the sky and the stones in the distance. A circumstantial Western American version of the meditation garden at Ryoanji.

*Near the back side of Bryce Canyon
Southern Utah*

PLANTS

V







Planter boxes are very strange things. I'm not quite sure what they really are. Are they a collection of semi-portable plants? Spots of color in an otherwise boring space? Are they little tiny attempts to control nature? Yes, they are, and we love them. Every culture has them in one way or another. Tires filled with dirt on the front lawn and planted with Daisies is the same as a Count telling his staff to brighten things up a bit on the South terrace.

Menaggio, Italy



Finally we enter the realm of Topiary, Penjing and Bonsai. The clipping of plants, to conform to our desires and fantasies. There are those who think of this activity as a form of “Botanical torture.” But they seem outnumbered by the enormous group of people who engage in this obsessive clipping. There are obviously a lot of people who like their Nature very, very ordered and organized.

*Les Jardins du Manoir d'Eyrignac,
Salignac, France*



Cypress, arborvitae (*Thuja* spp.) and Yew (*taxus*) are commonly used in this obsessive-compulsive desire to get nature to shape up. It certainly keeps a lot of hedge trimmers employed as the tiresome plants just keep on growing. (A lot more on this later.)

*Les Jardins du Manoir d'Eyrignac,
Salignac, France*



Like many of the great palaces of Europe, the gardens are a lot more impressive than the grand houses. Julien de Cervel owned the chateau and gardens in the 1860's and began importing thousands of Boxwood (trees, *Buxus sempervirens*). He started having them trimmed in extraordinary shapes. Originally, these gardens were designed by a pupil of Andre Le Notre, then neglected for many years. The current restoration was accomplished by Kleber Rossillon and opened to the public in 1996.

Les jardins de Marqueyssac
Vézac, Dordogne, France



This chateau garden is owned by an American real estate magnate and he maintains a small year round staff to take care of guests. He has more than one gardener and they clip the topiary, just to let nature know who really runs the show.

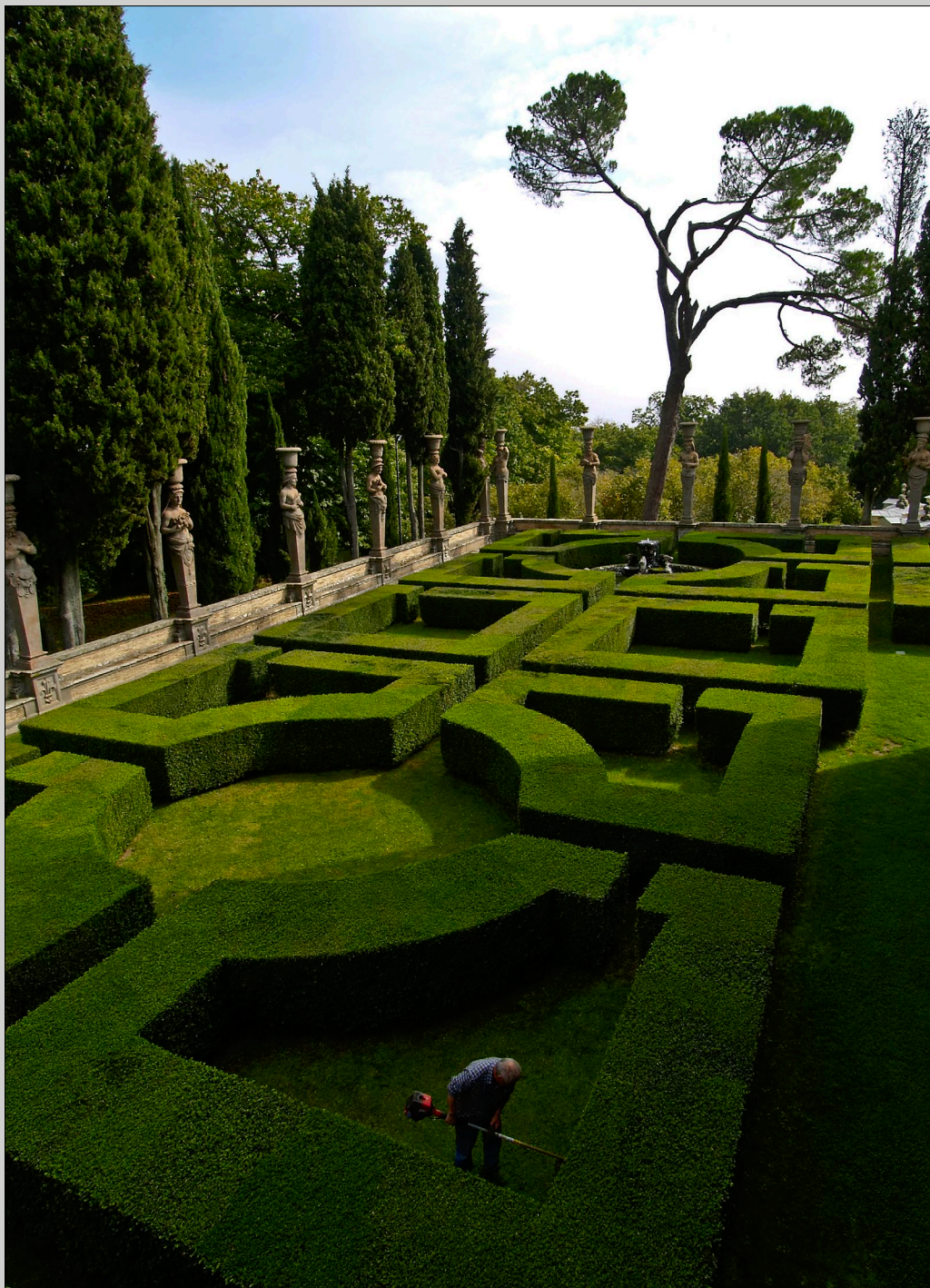
*Undisclosed location,
Near the Loire Valley,
France*



This is in a town that was a French colony. Then came the British and they bring Britain with them wherever they go, and their games come with them. Lawn bowling requires a perfectly manicured surface. (Compare this surface to those used in Bocci or Pétanque, let alone Irish “Road bowling.”) These lawns look as though they have been either combed (they have been) or manufactured and today it is hard to tell the difference. What really matters is you have to wear your whites, speak softly and tread carefully on your perfect nature.

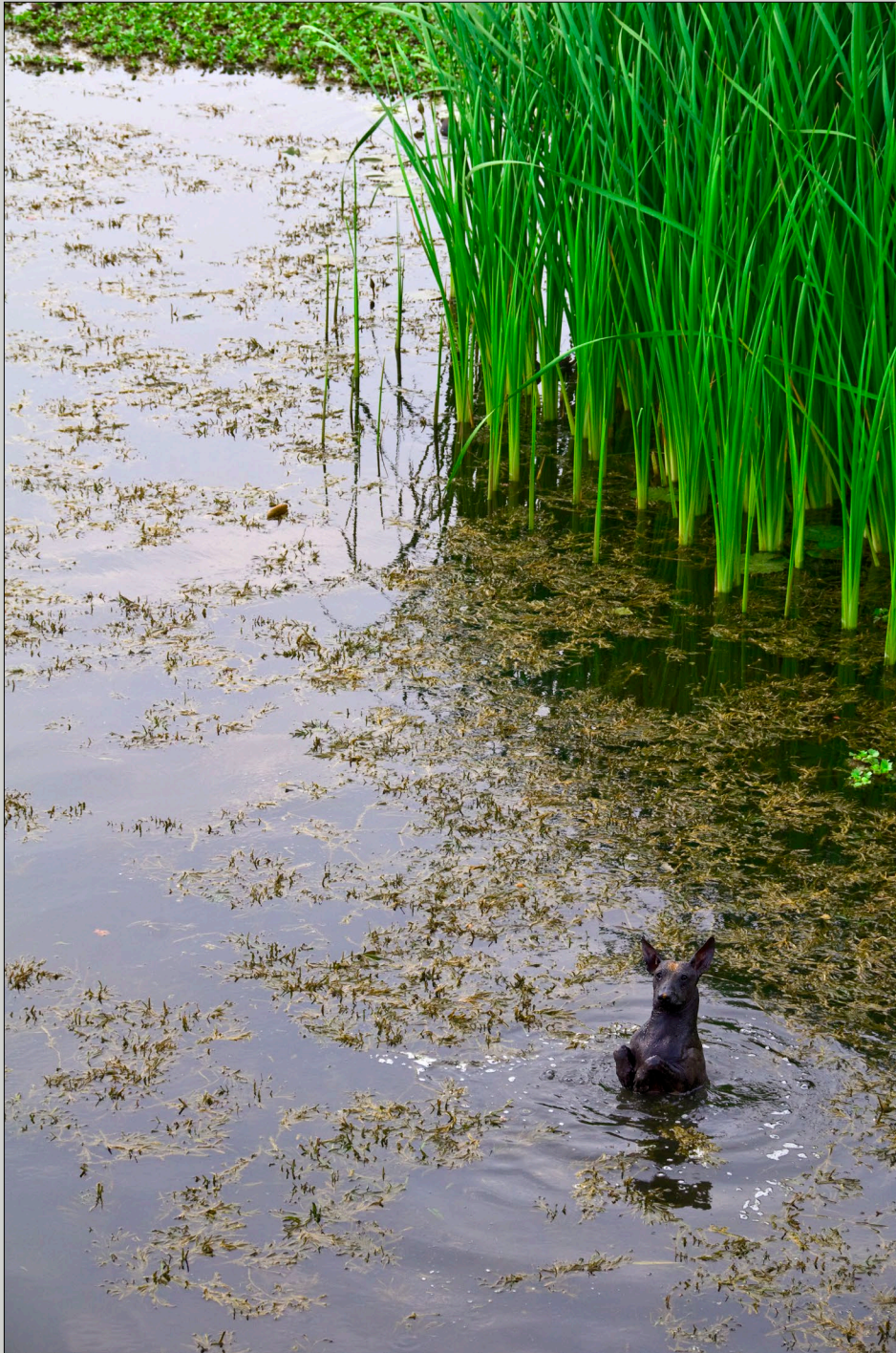
It is a bit surprising that these are the same people who play rugby and tear opponents’ ears off.

*Akaroa, Banks Peninsula
South Island, New Zealand*



Once you buy a diamond, the cost is over. When you buy or inherit a Villa you learn how to hemorrhage money. The word maintenance comes from the French verb 'maintenir,' and stems from 'la main' the hand. To hold in the hand is to care for something, to maintain it, and it turns out to be the most expensive of all. But of course, the old place needs to look just as neat as it always did. After all what would people think?

*Villa Lante,
Bagnaia, Italy*



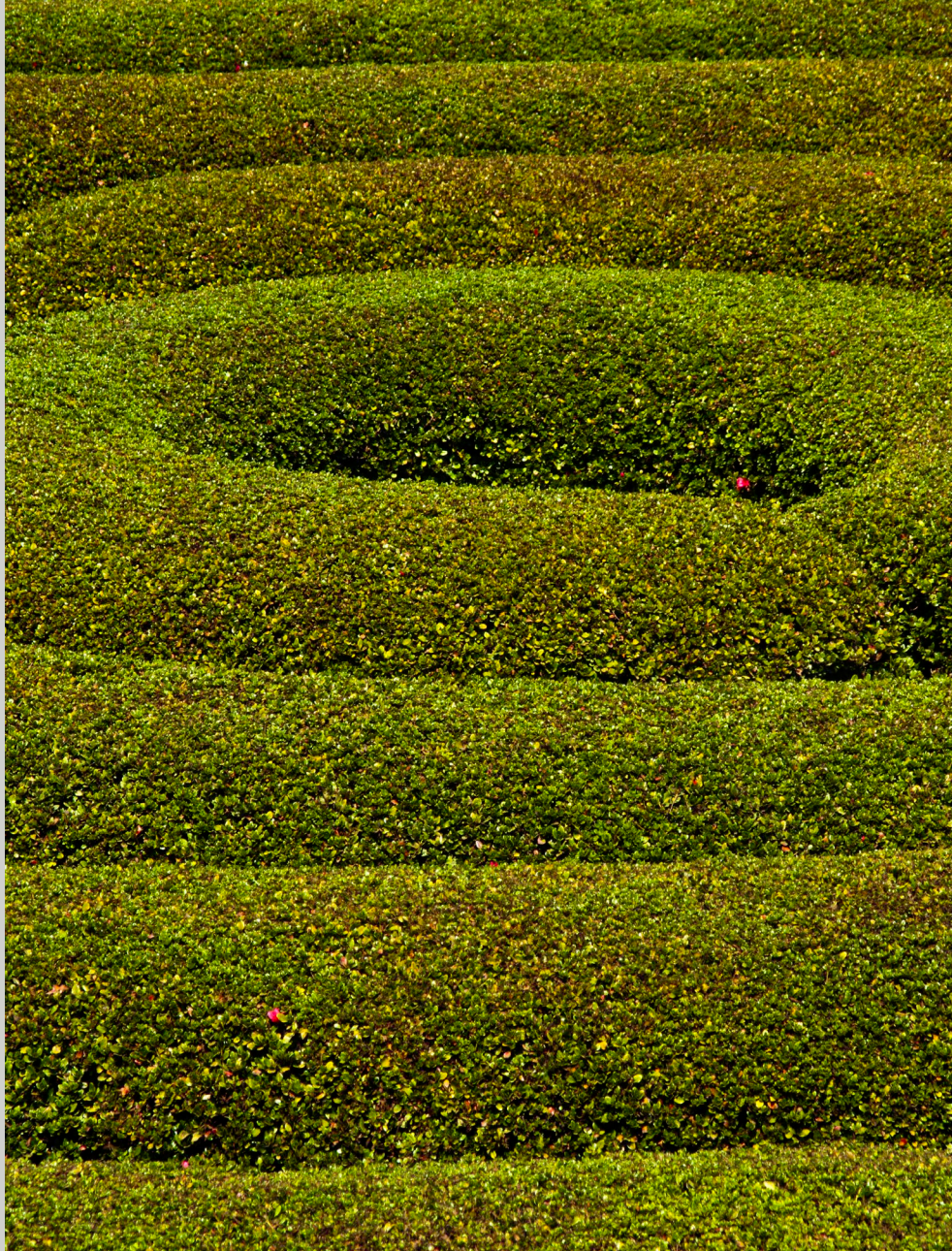
Given all the effort put into taking care of plants and water in a garden we can rightfully ask what place is there for animals in the idea of garden? The answer is not much at all. There were provisions earlier on, but now there is almost none. Animals are seen as disruptive and are usually discouraged. Even domestic animals are seen as a pain in the neck.

*Chan Chan,
Moche Valley, Peru*



If animals are really decorative and fit in with our idea of flamboyance and the display that goes along with it, then, we are willing to include them in the garden. (The racket peacocks make could wake the dead, but then again, the tourists are not in the garden at dawn when the peacocks let loose.)

*Isola Bella, Lake Como,
Italy*



Many castles are surrounded by a moat. Yes, you always put the most valuable things behind as many barriers as possible. It is our way of safeguarding something. Caring for it. When the artist Robert Irwin takes us down the long ramp in the garden he designed for the Getty Center we arrive at a kind of moat at whose center are elaborately clipped and carefully maintained swirling plants. I don't think he was just showing off his horticultural wizardry. The message: the thing to be protected and cared for now is what is left of nature and it is the most important job we have. It might be the only one.

*The Getty Center
Los Angeles, California*



Taking clues from nature might be one of the oldest creative urges. This temporary 'Land Art' installation by an artist is taking its clues from the hill beyond as a way to relieve the enormous flatness of the adjacent valley that supplies more than half of the vegetables grown in America.

*Undisclosed location,
Central Valley, California*



Tapis Vert means *green carpet* or an expanse of lawn, but carpets have patterns in them too and if you extrude those patterns you begin to have a hedge complex and from there it is an easy step into the idea of a maze. Claude Mollet and his family in the 16th century are generally given credit for the introduction of boxwood to garden design and the use of the 'Parterre,' (fr. 'on the ground')

*Villa Lante,
Bagnaia, Italy*

Six

TEMPORARILY ABLE-BODIED

V
I

INSTITUT DE FRANCE
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What are the Aesthetics of Nature?

What is Beautiful?

Since most of our information comes in through our eyes, we are tempted to think of beauty as primarily visual, but where do we put the idea that one of the things I most appreciate about nature is silence. Another thing I love is standing still while it moves. After a storm, slack-jawed in awe, just standing still and watching the swirling is a pleasure of this clumsy and complicated life. Just watching. Where the hell does that fall in the realms of reason and beauty?

In his book, “Second Nature,” Michael Pollan makes a beautifully crafted argument for ‘the garden’ as the solution to the controversy between development (use by humans) and conservation. He presents the case that if we become aware of our adjustment activities, in the role of a gardener, as opposed to that of either a rapist or a savior, we will have a better relationship with nature. For the most part, he may be right. The part he doesn’t really get, as Noel Perrin said, “A generation ago, the environmental quality light turned from green to yellow.”

The place where Mr. Pollan is right on the money, is in his perception that we are very happy when we are actively involved in working with elements of the natural world. We really get off on screwing around with natural things.

I want to increase the clarity in my relationship with the natural world and I thought the idea of the garden just might hold some keys to improving my understanding. I have spent some serious time designing landscapes but I have never spent any serious time learning from a garden. I wanted to understand the idea of a garden.

Leonardo Da Vinci said, “Ideas have consequences.” And having the idea of spending some time in a great garden caused me look for one that would help me see what gardens were about in some new way. It had to be more than a merely decorative place. It needed to be of substance. I needed a garden layered with complex meanings. *What I wanted was a symbol, and I found it in the garden of Claude Monet.*



Claude Monet
Photo: Ralph Nadar

The cofounder of **Reader's Digest**, Lila Acheson Wallace was so upset when she saw the condition of Claude Monet's garden that she wrote a check to pay for the restoration. And while she was at it, she paid for the restoration of a group of buildings that became studios and apartments for visiting artists. People, like myself, who wanted to learn something from this famous place.

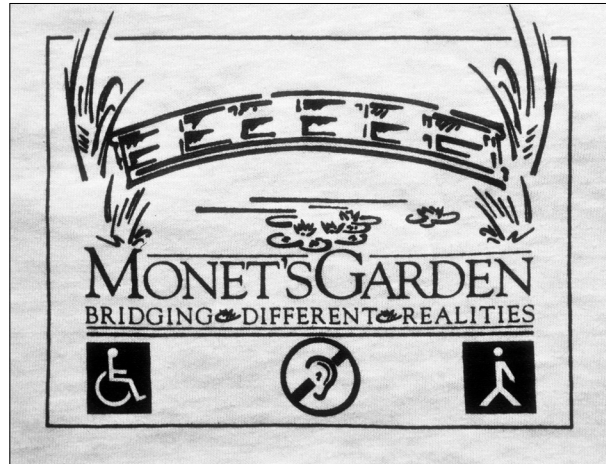
In order for an artist to become a resident at the garden, you had to be awarded a grant for a project that would provide some social good through the use of the garden and studios. Our project was called "Bridging Different Realities."

The Americans with Disabilities Act had passed in 1990 and yet few designers knew what it meant or how to deal with it. In partnership with a Non-profit organization called Associated Students Incorporated, I made a proposal to take a team of disabled college students to famous gardens in France to discover what they could learn and to confront places conceived before anyone was thinking about the needs of the disabled. The caveat was that when the students returned to California they would act as a team of advisors to Architects and Landscape Architects who were learning to address Universal Design.

The entire process was extraordinarily complex and very successful. The members of the disabled team were students from California Polytechnic State University and Cuesta College and they called me a "TAB" and it means a, 'temporarily able-bodied' person, because eventually, we are all disabled in one way or another.

Watching a blind man eat a meal in a fancy Paris restaurant, seeing a deaf man dealing with dangerous traffic and hauling a wheel chair up into a train are very poignant memories.

When the team returned to California, design studio projects were created in the College of Architecture and Environmental Design around Universal Design and the results were exhibited in the Cal Poly University Gallery. Seminars, panel discussions and substantial media coverage of the students projects increased awareness of the need for universal design and the quality of the outcome of the project was far beyond any expectations.



The back of a promotional tee shirt attempts a connection between the disabled and the famous Japanese bridge in Monet's water garden.





After a sixteen hour flight, it was a long ride from Paris in the head gardener's pick up truck. I expected much more humble accommodations. This was my apartment and studio across the street from Monet's house. The address, appropriately enough, is *Les Nymphéas, Giverny*.



This group of smiling faces is the Disabled Team and their assistants. Left to right: Benny, Miriam, Erik, Ellen, Betty, Jeannie, Gary and Robert. The Photograph was taken by team member Danille.

Giverny, France June 1993



The hearing impaired member of the team said he was not hearing impaired, he was deaf. And that the only class he ever flunked was French, because he could not make any sense of the pronunciation. He called this place “VER-Sail-eez.

We got special permission for Benny to touch the sculptures because he could not see them. He can read Braille as fast as I can talk.

Versailles, France June 1993

NOTES FROM MY JOURNAL:

The disabled team departed last night and I was glad to come to the end of this phase of the project, but sad to see them go. Some place in the fourteen rolls of film I have already shot, there must certainly be a few really splendid images. The team recorded their perceptions of Monet's garden by writing journals, doing photography and painting watercolors. Most of the process is on video as well as in still photography. They are on the plane now, and I am sitting here trying to figure out what actually transpired during the time they were here.

I have begun to wonder if all truly inspirational experiences begin by dashed preconceptions and failed expectations. I would hate to think that humans are that far down in the evolutionary order. If recent experience can be any guide at all, there seems to be a need for at least some mechanism to our behavior patterns and experience might be one of the very few things we have to guide us. Certainly there are moral and religious and ethical compasses we depend upon, but the stick of our own experience seems the one we trip over the most often.

It may have been William James who said, "Wisdom consists of knowing what to overlook." Regardless of the author, I have been trying to learn from that statement and the project with the disabled team has allowed a much closer understanding of the value of that idea.

I have no intention of changing my profession, nor do I intend to spend much time riding some "politically correct" bandwagon, but many of the feelings I used to have about the disabled have changed or been erased. Much of the change had to do with the rather exceptional nature of the people on the team, but some of it had to do with me and that part is what I wanted to share with you.

Two nights before they departed, we were doing some final videotaping to get some closure on their thoughts and the video camera seemed to pull their hearts and minds into a focus more pointed than any of the time before. Their emotions were sewn like patches on their chest. Each one a little more powerful until there was not a dry eye in the room. The young woman with cerebral palsy and spastic quadriplegia also has hearing loss and speech defects. And, she is a real delight to be around. The most surprising thing about Danielle is the quality of her perception. She is more careful about the things she sees. It might be that she sees so well because it is one of the things she can do on her own, one of those independent things that help her be herself. She is unabashedly childlike in the perceptions of the soft and cuddly things she finds attractive. At twenty-two, animals and flowers still make her happy in ways I have long since forgotten. Her smile is infectious, clear and honest. When she begins to discuss the rational behind the architectural orientation of the palace at Versailles, you see instantaneously a person with many of her facets not only intact, but, intact in ways common people can only wish for. Deception has skated over this person. Greed and corruption don't appear in her countenance. Because I have yet to read the journals I requested from the team members, I'm not sure what Danielle learned by coming to Monet's Garden. What I am sure of is that I may never learn as much from Monet's Garden as I have already learned from Danielle.

Benny is writing his journal entries in Braille and will send me the transcriptions later. He types around 120 words per minute so I don't think I will have to wait long. On the surface, Benny is almost a stereotype blind person. He is a musician, he reads Braille, has difficulty with the acoustic chaos of contemporary life. Underneath that surface is a richness and depth. His visual darkness is brighter and more optimistic than the light in most of Monet's paintings. He has found passion, humor and even glee in his darkness. The obvious idea is to assume it is because he listens harder. The less obvious idea is that he thinks before he talks or moves. Forethought is the accurate term, but we most often call it foresight. And it is available nonstop, from a blind man, no less. What an amazing idea. Foresight seems in such short supply today, I have been

wondering if Benny has considered giving seminars in advanced seeing for the leaders of our country.

Benny has been swimming in the ocean while I have been sailing on a small lake. His tools are the submarine and the bathyscaphe. And while I have seen the sky and watched the light upon the water, he has felt the deep. When he was a small boy, before it went dark, he could see a little, now that he is older, he can see much better even if his eyesight is gone. Watching the way he sees helped me try to pay attention better than I had before. Like a pinpoint of light, the after-image of Benny lingers long after he has moved out of what I ineptly call sight.

It is rather odd to think of Erik as teaching listening when he doesn't have what most of us call hearing. He had spinal meningitis when he was four years old. He is quite the vital young man at the moment and mentioned something in the video interview that shook me down to the core. He said, "You can't fall in love if you can't have a conversation."

Not only did he remind me of all the times I had been in countries where I couldn't speak the language, but he also reminded me of all the times when I had been in countries where I couldn't understand what I heard. I thought about the times when I retreated into myself and there were many times when myself was not much of a refuge and I simply felt alone, isolated and angry. So often I have not understood what I heard. And in those times, have pressed on regardless, as if increasing the volume were the only option available. Erik let me in on a secret: The ability to listen is the ability to love. Erik listens with his eyes. He possesses a kind of visual sonar and it allows him to see the roundness of things. He lingers over the visual surface and thinks about what he sees. Pondering and wondering his way through a world he has just barely introduced me to. I will always deeply appreciate his introduction.

At the conclusion of our interviews, I mentioned the reason we laugh when a comedian falls down a flight of stairs is that we are happy that we are not the ones falling and glad that someone else is taking the fall. The thought is connected to my tendency to look away when I see someone who is disabled. Of course a part of that reason is I don't want to invade anyone's privacy by staring at them, but I have

averted my eyes in the past because I was afraid of them. Afraid I might become one of them. Well, I have been one of them in the past, I am one of them now and I will become one of them sooner or later. And the lesson they all have taught me is I need have no more fear. And I am very thankful for having developed this opportunity for them to teach me.

Down the street from my house is the churchyard where Monet is buried. I wonder what he would say if he knew what his garden has done?



Monet's House (*Le pressoir* - the cider press house) practically turns its back on the street. The garden is surrounded by high walls that are part of the local tradition, but also it was a long time before Monet got along with his neighbors. He wanted his gardens to be very private. Monet liked nature as long as he could order it the way he wanted.



Having access to Monet's Garden and living across the street was a lot more intimidating than one might think. The oddly shaped round brass key on the lower left is the key to Monet's house and garden. A lot of people would like to have it.

"I always perceive more and otherwise than I see."

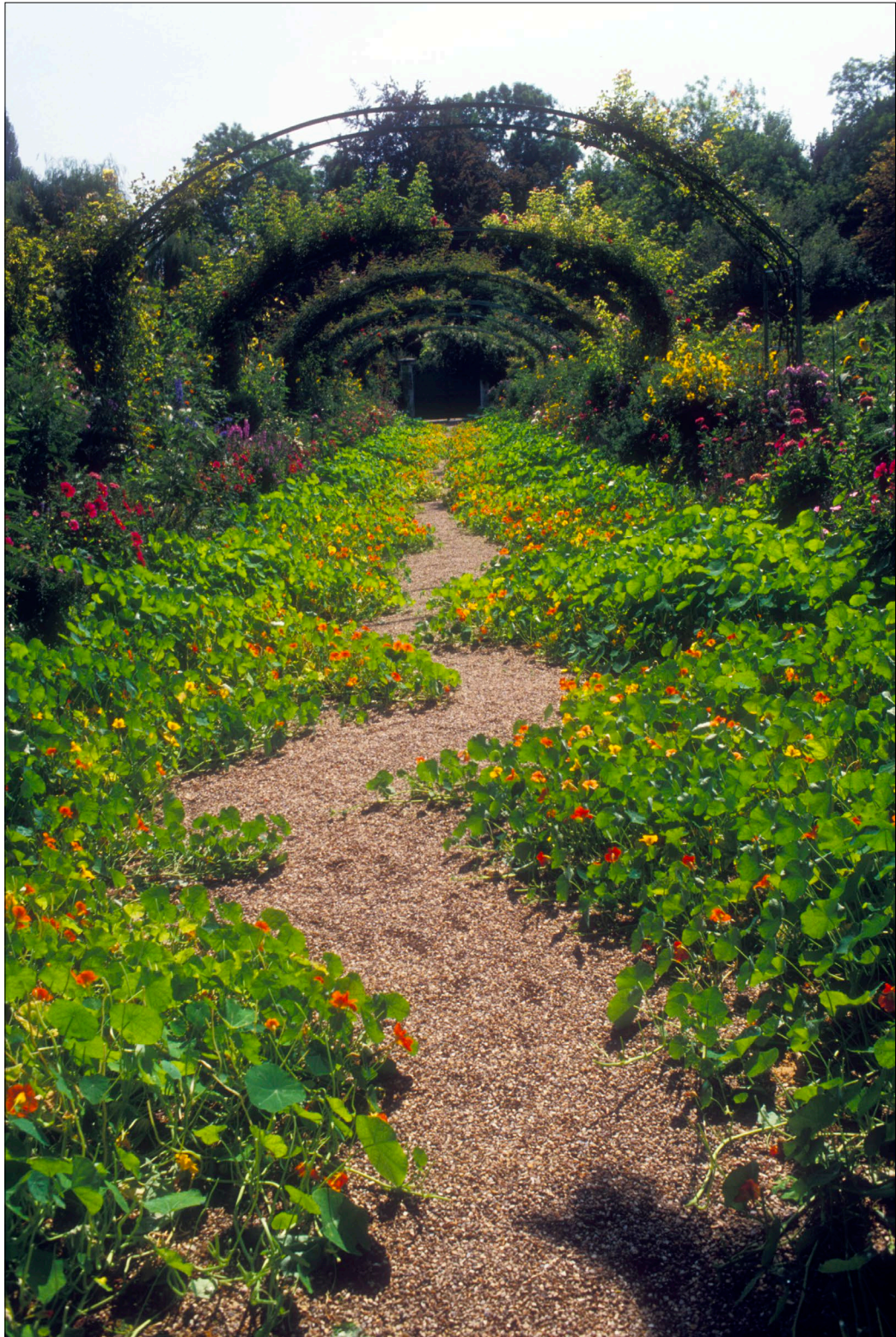
Jean-Paul Sartre

Today is Quatorze Juillet, Bastille Day and I have been living at the house and garden of Claude Monet over a month. It is about time I write some notes regarding what I have learned from being in France and particularly from being in Claude Monet's garden. I have, indeed, been in Monet's garden. Many people spend time visiting the garden but I am becoming familiar with it in ways that are only possible if one is able to be in a place for an extended period. In effect, it is, a kind of affair. The initial blush of attraction has worn off me now and we are slowly getting to know each other in a variety of subtle ways.

There is still some dancing going on between me and the garden. What I mean by that is we are not really intimate yet. Even though it is simply across the street from my house, there are days when I will intentionally not go to the garden. It has to do with the fact that I have not given myself up to the cult of the garden that is so pervasive here in the community of Giverny and even in the surrounding towns.

I have a deep appreciation and respect for this place, but there is still a little clinical distance in my observation and it is because I want to discover what is hidden here. The obvious part is that people come here from all over the world to be thrilled by beautiful colors and fabulous flowers. The second part of the obvious is to realize that Monet may have talked about impressions and argued with himself about how and what he saw, but his paintings have to do with beauty. They have to do with the world of the pictorial. A place of visually pleasant surroundings where the light and air and the landscape are in peaceful harmony. His paintings delete or at least carefully avoid depicting the stench, grime and dynamic of his time.

I am beginning to believe the primary reason people come here is not because they have some inherent love of gardens but because the life of the ordinary person is filled with noise, squalor, chaos and the tragedy of regularity. The garden is beautiful and it is relief from the visual insults of modern life.



Monet had between five and eight gardeners at any given time. By the time of my residency, there were ten gardeners. Monet might have thought of himself as a gardener, but he was much more of a garden director.

Central entry alley in Early September when the Capucine (Nasturtiums) are trying to swallow the path

The garden is a biological connection to the land. And to make that connection it is far simpler to come here and see the work of a continual army of gardeners than it is to attempt the same work at home. I admit there is a great number of avid gardeners among the visitors and their motivation is an outright love of things botanic. Plants hold a special place in their worlds and the attention and affection they bring to the garden is the simple realization that it is possible to have a relationship with plants in a manner deep and rewarding and that particular relationship is simply unavailable in relationships with other people. The real gardeners here surely agree with Beethoven when he said, 'Given the choice between people and trees, I would always choose trees.'

European and American cultures are primarily urban and currently view nature simplistically and think of it as being almost totally botanic. We spend most of our time with pavement under our feet and, almost without interest, we have watched the gradual vanishing of wild animals and have come to understand nature almost entirely as an abundance of plant material. When we drive into the countryside and see a greater proportion of plants than buildings we are drawn to the fallacious conclusion that we are re-entering the natural world. Since so few of us are active participants with livestock we have even lost the domesticated animal link to nature. We have come to see a forest as a natural garden, even if we have little understanding of what constitutes a forest environment. The mere appearance of large numbers of trees immediately conjures up visions of the health and vigor of nature. We love plants because we see them as evidence of the fecundity and infallibility of nature. We assume any large quantity of plants demonstrates the blossoming of the soil and have come to internalize the vision of a 'wasteland' as one with no plants. Consequently, we have little understanding of the value of the desert regions of the world and find a great affinity with those areas dominated by anything vegetative.

There is a passion among these gardeners, which they seem to identify by discussing beauty. But when pinned down, beauty is still a rather vague notion to them. They certainly have given themselves up to the notion of botanical beauty without any deep thought as to what actually constitutes this supposed beauty. The descriptions they offer have to do with values they have awarded to contrasting colors, textures and sensory experiences. From almost any rational philosophical stance, the gardeners will have difficulty defending this argument. This issue of being able to defend one's position is substantive and yet, most of the visitors don't have any difficulty at all with deciding that seductive colors and textures and smells have both instrumental and even intrinsic values. They seem quite content to simultaneously hold multiple and conflicting values.



The water garden was so much more fun to photograph and so much more comfortable to be in, I spent most of my time there.

Preferences for particular plants, particular varieties, particular groupings or styles seems to be something visceral which allows personal taste be imposed with complete impunity. Some prefer Roses to Irises and when queried about that preference stare at me wondering how anyone could ever prefer an Iris to a Rose?

I have read that the only colored foliage plant Monet would allow in his water garden was a copper beech tree. That particular tree is still there and it is beautiful. Much of its beauty comes from the contrast it provides to the great mass of greens in the adjacent areas, but the purity of only allowing one colored foliage plant in the garden becomes completely illogical when one looks at the riot of color in the enormous diversity of plants elsewhere in other parts of the garden. A friend with extensive gardening experience once told me she would never allow a Liquidambar tree in her garden. Monet certainly planted a Liquidambar in his garden and this issue of plant preference seems somewhat like a religious belief. Either one gets it, or one doesn't. At the moment, I don't.

Fortunately, beauty is different from preference. Beauty has qualities we can identify and many of those qualities have to do with the kind of person who decides this garden is worthy of a visit. Some have to do with the garden itself:

- Unlike most of the impressionist painters, Monet was a successful bourgeois and his garden is an expression of successful middle class life. The plants are not only symbolic, but real indications of luxuriousness and abundance. The plants are close and intimate and they are intended to be seen as such.
- There is a great density of the decorative experience available in the garden. It is capable of temporarily covering many problems with a blanket of distracting and diverse sensory experience. This flower garden is a form of botanic television. The less tolerant might even be inclined to think of it as a botanical Buchenwald or some aberrant form of an ecologically based 'virtual reality' where things really are the way you wish they were.
- It is a very private family garden and consequently, it has become an icon of the quiet, peace and luxury everyone aspires to. It is a mark of success; it is a symbolic return to nature.
- Impressionism is an idealized version of life. It establishes a very careful detachment from the problems that have always been part of daily life.

palatable than precise truth. Modernism, by contrast, wanted to scrape the plate clean and tried to do so. Impressionism knew that nothing can be scraped off the plate and the more vague we are about something the more we like it.



The house has been restored with as much care as the garden. The family must have used nearby homes to house the staff as well as the steady stream of visitors.

This tree is at the edge of the Water Garden and it seems to have colored foliage. Off to the side is a smoke tree. (*Cotinus coggygia atropurpurea*) That *atropurpurea* part means it has purple foliage. Monet said, only a copper beech? Really? Plant and color preferences are a matter of opinion, or, taste. Choices like these are not about reason.

“Taste and colors we don’t discuss.”

“Des goûts et des couleurs, on ne discute pas.”

Les goûts et les couleurs ne se choisissent pas selon des critères rationnels. Il est donc inutile d’essayer de convaincre son interlocuteur que les siens sont bons ou mauvais. Personne ne peut en effet avoir raison. L’usage de ce proverbe est souvent étendu aux opinions.









Considering his first wife died from the deprivations of poverty, Monet became astoundingly successful during his later years. During his time at Giverny, three studios were constructed and two enormous and costly gardens. His house is big, but not enormous. There were lots of children, (eight total) numerous household staff and at one time *ten gardeners*. That is quite some payroll to keep going. From time to time, Georges Clemenceau, the Prime Minister, would come to Monet's house to discuss painting and especially horticulture. I have a hard time imagining Woodrow Wilson dropping by Georgia O'keefe's studio to discuss anything.

Standing in his last studio (now a gift shop) contemplating his large elliptical series on the water lilies. (Les Nymphéas)

- Almost as a contradictory idea, nothing precise in its reference is ever popular. Impressionism knew that life is vague and smeary. Impressionism was and is clever enough to know the imagery of vague success is more

A few symbols in Monet's Garden are relatively obvious but worthy of repetition for the sake of clarity as the obvious isn't always so obvious:

1. Flowers are an archetypal symbol. The flowers are close to you in both parts of this garden, (in the formal garden near the house and in the water garden across the road.) They are intimate and they are the ultimate feminine expression. They are the goddesses of love and at least since the Middle Ages have been symbols of innocence. They are not crops or fruit. They come to us gratis and are a spontaneous emanation of nature.

The flower as a motif is an image of being. And the Lotus or water Lilly is the most universal symbol, with its feet in the chaotic muck of life, the slime of death and decay, and yet the resulting flower is clean pure and symmetrical. Flowers, and especially the water Lilies, are universally symbolic, nearly trite and yet still quite believable. Beginnings and endings have the most weight for humans and we must take flowers quite seriously since we take them to funerals and weddings where our gestures of respect have the most sincerity.

2. Water is another hackneyed symbol and yet Monet was able to assist in the public understanding of something intensely private. Endless change and depth. Literally, a place of reflection. On a meditative or contemplative level, a still pond allows us not to see the water, but to see the sky in reflection. Some of his paintings even look upside down because he looks so intently at the reflection. One of his last paintings, (now in the Musee Marmottan) initially appears to be a painting of a green boat sitting in a quiet corner of the water garden. The boat is only the superficial topic; the real subjects are the waving bands of grass undulating slowly beneath the surface. The garden allows us to look closely enough and slowly enough at something so that the obvious is able to elude us. Monet's painting of the boat simply allows us to get there without all the work of sitting in the garden until we no longer see the boat.

Finally, people from the middle-class, have enough disposable income to make a pilgrimage to this garden, and in advance they know they have been deprived of nature. They realize their life is like the flowers here, beautiful, transitory, fragile and fleeting.



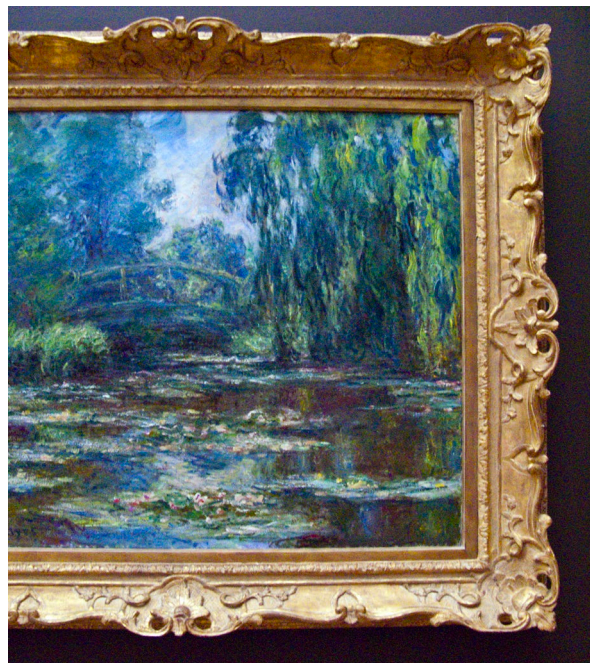
A field of wild Poppies a few miles from Monet's garden. Pavot coquicot, (fr.) and are supposed to indicate ephemeral charms



What the visitors don't seem to understand, at least on any rational level, when they enter the garden they are not looking at nature, what they are looking at is culture.

How did we come to look at culture rather than nature? Certainly it started with philosophical ethics regarding human values. Even though the sets of values leading to this conclusion were developed before the Renaissance, we can use the pre-revolutionary thinkers in France to help understand the sequence of thoughts leading to our current perception of culture rather than nature.

After the fall of the Roman Empire, the central question attendant to the evolution of western civilization was the existence of God. Everything revolved around this issue. As various groups were establishing territories and methods of government, the peasants would rally behind a strong individual or family for protection. Eventually these families became dukes, earls and princes and finally entire monarchies. And the authority of these leaders was established because there was physical strength and political power, but the reason any of this was possible to be understood as an ongoing process of organizational structure was the pervasive belief that the leaders were descended from God.





The two images on the left are from two different trips to the Getty Center in Los Angeles. They were taken years after my residency at Monet's garden and yet, to my surprise, I remember his gardens through his paintings as much as having lived there. I don't quite know what to make of that.



The Japanese bridge in July, nearly engulfed by Wisteria.



If you believed in the existence of God, by extension, you believed in the divine rights and powers of your leaders; Par La Grace De Dieu and Durch Gottes Gnaden. And even though this system worked rather well, it was fickle and unpredictable. The only two constants were power and fear. The Renaissance began the unstoppable changing of the tide but it was not truly visible in Europe until Voltaire. Voltaire functioned best in a lofty intellectual and rational realm but his wit and encyclopedic knowledge had to exist within a monarchy and always under the attentive eyes of royal censors. His writing tonality and expression always had to recognize he was in a delicate position. The metaphor of children was of particular use when he wanted to say one thing and mean something else. The title of his famous work 'Candide' is in itself a metaphor as 'Candide' means innocent. The question the critics didn't seem to ask was, 'What kind of innocence?' A little later, Jean-Jacques Rousseau was able to go much further with some of the undercurrents only hinted at by Voltaire.

Born in Switzerland, Rousseau was an outsider, one of society's discontents. He may have not said it directly, but he implied that science and religion had established a hokey alliance of self-reinforcement. He was continually hounded for his writings and his sexual orientation. He was called a libertine and a rake. Long before Freud, Rousseau became a beacon of light indicating the slow return of the repressed. He was in favor of self-expression and expressed the amazing and revolutionary idea that man had a right to be happy.

It seems preposterous that history could hang on a thing as simple as an idea, but it has proven to be the case over and over again. Rousseau realized the monarchy was an arm of the church and that the religious monarchy was only selling obedience. His idea: God was not in the church, God was not in the monarchy, and God was in nature. And the only way a person could restore their soul was in nature. (*If God was in nature and people had a right to happiness, what was the need for the monarchy and the church?*) (This is real heresy.)

Prior to the Age of Reason, when one looked at a tree, the only question occurring in relation to that tree was: Who's tree is it? The age of reason helped us to understand that the word religion means literally "to bind" and that inherent in this understanding is the realization that if things are bound together then they are held together by commonalty and there is no room for diversity. If, God is truly in nature and nature requires diversity, then Western European religions are in conflict with nature. Chateaubriand and other early romantics were beginning to side with nature and the paintings of Albert Bierstadt implied that you could actually see "The hand of God," in the unspoiled places where nature was new and that was in America.

Diderot certainly wrote important laws and Robespierre hated the old system so much he even changed the name of the months, but in the end, it is Rousseau who can take much of the credit for making all those royal heads roll, and it occurred just by him thinking that God was in nature instead of somewhere else.





Salix alba tristis, **The weeping white willow**, loves to have its feet in the water. This willow on the right side of the bridge is over a hundred years old and nearly at the end of its lifespan. The composition of the entire water garden will change when this single plant dies.

Above: 1895

Left: 1993



Considering all that has been written about impressionism, it is amazing how little commentary has been made of the seasons. We hear so much about the romantic, even Venetian (pellucid) light, there is a tendency to forget how much of the year is grey and dull in Giverny. Flaubert said, “*You are as likely to find sunshine in Normandy as you are to find a diamond in a pig’s arse.*”



Monet painted in all seasons, some of his most memorable were done of snow scenes and I don’t think he ever painted his own garden in winter. It was Autumn that had the most surprise.



There used to be enough physical space for ideas. The crowded conditions of our cities seem to suffocate that space and a journey to a country garden is simply a quest for relief. Although we like to think of ourselves having cities vastly improved over the times of pre-revolutionary France or even the middle of the industrial revolution, the fact is we are not able to produce contemporary cities with anywhere near enough open space to support the needs written into our genetic code. When you think of the amount of time humans have lived on the planet, probably 95% of that time has been lived out-of-doors, and certainly out of cities. There is something demeaning in the thought that we have, ourselves, allowed our cities to be constructed with so little regard for our basic human needs.

Buffeted by the winds of power and greed, we have abdicated our rights to immediate connections with the natural world. It is therefore not surprising that most urban dwellers run immediately to the country when they have a vacation. The French are particularly lemming-like in their frenetic dash for the sea and sun. But most of all, they are seeking relief from cities. In the contemporary world, the vengeance of the poor is overpopulation. It may be a weapon eventually more powerful than bombs, and it happens because sex is the only pleasure really available to the poor. I am willing to postulate the vengeance of the upper class is greed and sloth masked by control. I am unsure of this postulate, what I am sure of is the vengeance of the middle class is tourism. The middle class has the liquid capital, the time and the sheer volume of people to visit and trample out of existence, everything worth seeing in the world.

On the Normandy coast sits a wonder of human faith and tenacity and any summer will see two million tourists on the famous St Michael's Mount. In the fourteenth century there were not two million people in the whole world who knew for sure where France was itself, or if it even existed. This year, on any afternoon in August, one could walk on the shoulders of the tourists all the way from the entrance causeway to the center of the chapel and only a tiny fraction of this crowded insanity has anything even remotely to do with religious pilgrimage. What it has to do with is *destination disease*, a desire to be someplace other than where one is at the moment (normally in cities) and we have to have names for the places we want to go in order to have a purpose, a reason for going, when in fact, we simply want to leave and have a difficult time saying so. Frivolity is apparently not as deeply rooted in the French soul as is guilt and the 'Age of Reason'. This summer there is a poster in the Paris Metro with the type of sign seen at the entrance of every city or town and it always indicates the name of that city. The word printed on the sign in the Metro is "*ailleurs*" it is not the name of a city; it means 'elsewhere' or, '*Anywhere, except here.*'





*The little bridge from the Japanese bridge. Many tourists stand in line for hours just to be able to have this view for a few minutes.
1993*



Mont St. Michel. A stronghold since pre-Roman times, now, like the Eiffel Tower, a symbol of the whole country. On 16 June 2006, the French prime minister's €164 million project to build a hydraulic dam using the waters of the river Couesnon and of tides to help remove the accumulated silt deposited by the rising tides, and to make Mont Saint Michel an island again. The dam has been built and soon a pedestrian bridge will connect to the mainland instead of a causeway. We have a hard time leaving things alone.

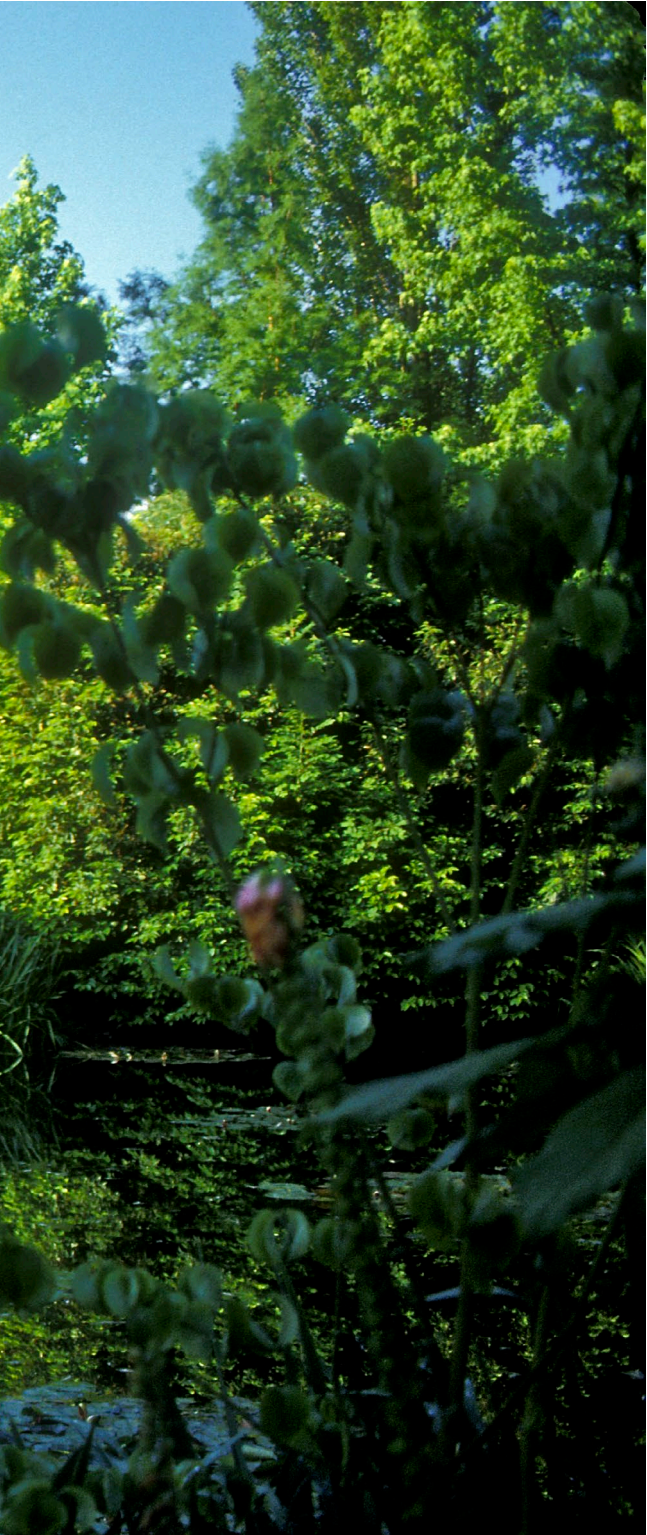


Sometimes art manages to put its foot into the stream of anthropological mythology and in France the references are so common we are almost completely immune to their history and consequences. The national crest contains not rampant lions and knights-errant, but flowers. And not just any flowers either. They are Irises and they are three of them. They are a type of Liliaceae, showy, trumpetlike flowers with large leaves. In Greek mythology the lily was dedicated to the goddess Hera, the wife of Zeus.

The three specific 'Fleur de Lys' in the seal are intended to inform the masses that the monarchy (and the present government by extension) is the messenger of the Gods and the three of them represent the three graces: Life is one and it is you, vibrant in the center. Death is another, and is behind you. The third, re-birth, is always facing you. And here inside the 'Fleur de Lys', we begin a collusion of mythologies. The old, the new, and the now, and they all carry the implication that the cycle will continue forever. The cult of the eternal return is not so recent an invention as to be of Christian origin. It is at least as old as Venus of Willendorf, (ca. 4000 B.C.) and is probably even older, having to do with the fecundity of the earth. It has its references in the spring and it is the message of Persephone, wife of Hades and queen of the underworld. She is the Goddess in charge of all things Underground, in charge of pushing up beautiful flowers out of the cold grimy earth to indicate the end of winter and demonstrate the truth of the constant cycle of rebirth. In the Middle Ages, when women formed the greatest percentage of educated Europeans, they understood this history and mythology of Persephone and they recreated the cult of themselves. Our Lady of the Underground has become Our Lady, Notre Dame. And the touristic outing to Giverny and the gardens of a famous painter is a simple and convenient way to make a pilgrimage and to pay homage to Persephone and the basic desire in the human psyche to be constantly reborn, to never really die.



*The rose arbor on the East side with poplar plantations behind .
(See Chapter 7)
1993*



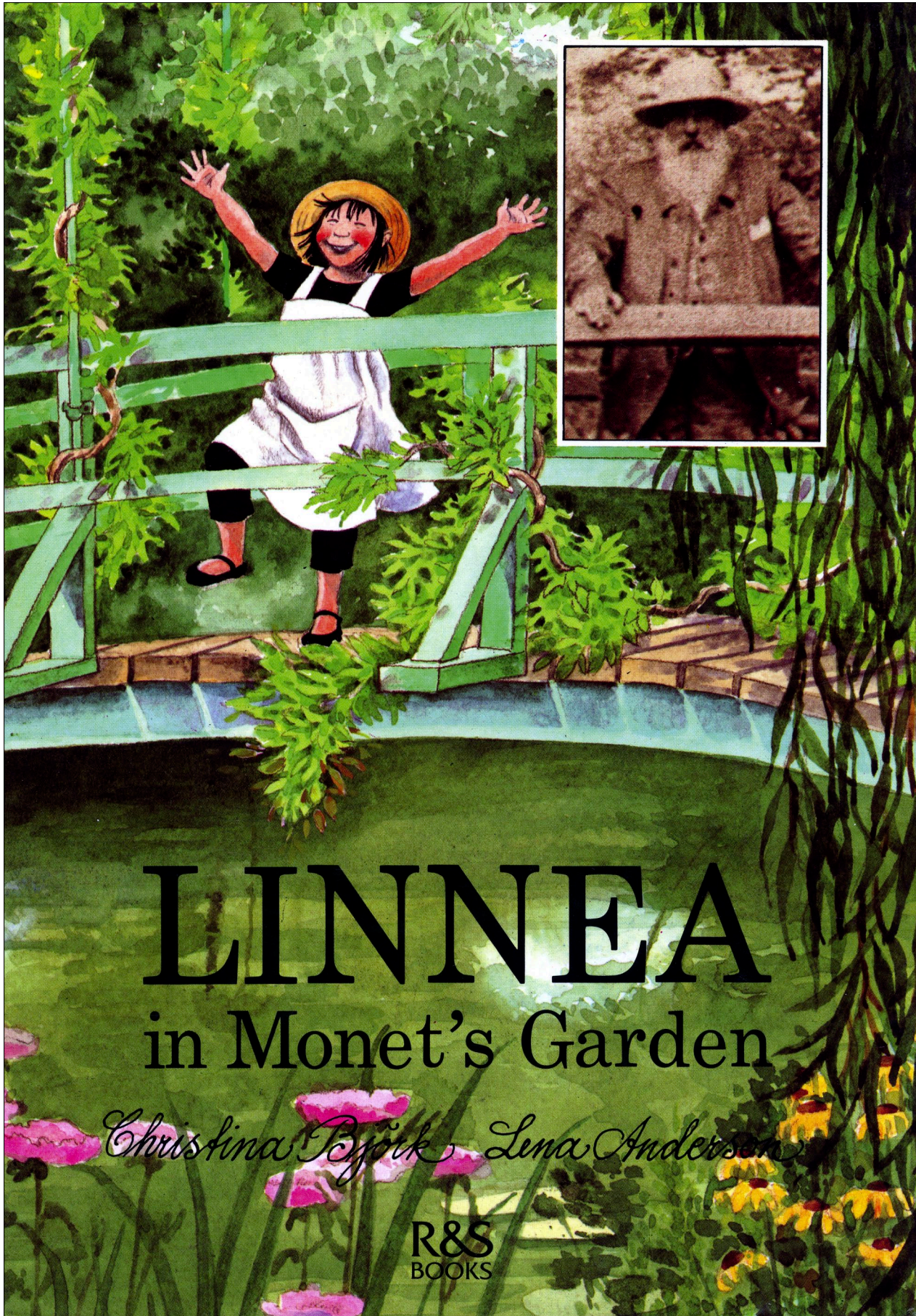
What is all this garden discussion really about anyway? If I am trying to catch something I need a net. It was Julian Barnes who said a net could be defined as “a collection of holes tied together with string.” Some of the strings used to support the arguments for the value of the natural world are terribly weak under the weight of reason. The strings fray and break and create even bigger holes. If I were truly interested in making a better net it would make sense to present a better case for nature.

When Rousseau and Voltaire used the metaphor of the child, specifically the *‘natural child,’* as a vehicle for discussing the place of children in society, they were attempting to attribute ‘rights’ to children. To state, without hesitation, that children have value. In the process of that assertion, what comes along with the inherent value of children is the assumption of the value of love. Now, how is it that the rationalist argument for the rights of children is based on something as illogical and unreasonable as love?

What one begins to see is that the reasonable, rationalist argument, is fueled with irrational components. Logic starts to show its illogical insides and turns back on itself. In order to subscribe to Descartes’ dictum of “I think, therefore I am”, one is not only clearly accepting a high value being placed on rational thought, but is also asked to accept the idea of inherent value in “I am.” Which is like saying there is value in being. In human beings. It would seem if we can assign inherent value to humans, by extension we could assign inherent values to nature.

The normal counter argument is to say rocks and water and plants can’t think and therefore they don’t have rights. That is to say they don’t have moral standing. If we are truly interested in changing our relationship with nature we need to re-orchestrate our legal concept of who or what has moral standing. At the moment, Christopher Stone presents the most convincing argument. He suggests we do something that sounds berserk to ordinary ears and it is to actually confer rights to trees. Not human rights, but rights in the sense that within our legal system it is necessary for something to have rights in order for it to be defended. If we (illogically) gave rights to children because we did something as irrational as love them, because we place a value on this completely indeterminate and irrational thing called love, we can certainly give rights to the natural world because we love it too.

If, in our stubbornness, we refuse to grant rights to trees and other portions of the natural world, we will be clinging to the illusion that we are separate from nature. Instead, we need to realize nature constitutes the largest part of the human unconsciousness. And the virtue in so doing is the recognition of parallel processes; nature is a process and our unconsciousness is also a process. We will never be part of the consciousness of trees because trees don’t have consciousness. What they have is process and we are part of that process. And we can’t see their unconscious process because we are part of that process. Nor can we see the consciousness of nature because we are part of that consciousness too. You can’t be in the audience and on the stage at the same time. It is time for us to realize we are on-stage with the natural world at the same time and there is no audience. This play is for us.



Was it William Wordsworth who said, “We murder to dissect.”? I don’t really know and like most, I never am quite sure of the quality of the sources of my information, but I am very insistent about the impact and importance of that same unsubstantiated information. Earlier this month, I asked an upper-middle class Englishman and woman why they had decided to visit Monet’s garden? They responded by saying they wanted to get out of Paris for a day and Monet’s Garden was in the guidebooks. He said, “One works one’s way down from the large print to the small, doesn’t one?” In other words, he was doing what he had been told, and he was having the perceptions Mr. Michelin and his green guide had told him he was supposed to have.

More recently, I asked a little girl why she had come to visit Monet’s Garden. She had come all the way from America and she was even a little surprised why I asked. She said it was because of “Linneae”. Linneae is another little girl. She is a fictional character in a book called “Linneae in Monet’s Garden.” Two Danish women who have provided a guide to the discovery and understanding of the garden wrote it.

The book is translated into several languages and circulated worldwide. While the book is certainly a delightful story of dreaming about coming to the garden and having that dream actually come true, it is also allegorical. In addition to the avowed purpose of the book, it serves three functions: First, it is intended to provide a small but comprehensible understanding of the relationship between a famous artist and a world he created in his paintings and in his garden, which one can actually visit. It performs this function beautifully, however, it also devalues your own personal experience as it is filtered through the lens of what others have already told you are supposed to perceive.

Secondly, it builds a bridge between two different fantasies. The first being Monet’s paintings about his perceptions of a place, the second being about his garden having some connection to the natural world. Both of these have to do with what John Fowles calls, “The increasingly narcissistic way... to make ourselves feel more positive, more dynamic, ...or by turning it (nature) into therapy, a free clinic for admirers of their own sensitivity.”

The third portion of the allegory carried by the book is to provide validation for our understanding of the natural world. Our sense of all places is connected to our capacity for imagining us being somewhere other than where we are at the moment. In Venice, upon

entering the Piazza San Marco for the very first time, I described to my daughters the various parts of the plaza that could not be seen from where we were standing. They asked me how I knew this place if I had never been there before and I responded by saying “I have seen so many photos of this Piazza, I feel like I have been here before.” Ginna Crandall clearly points out our understanding of a place comes not as a function of direct, visceral, primary experience, but rather, a result of the paintings and photographs we have already seen in advance of ever having seen the real place in with our own eyes. In other words, the garden confirms what we already know from having seen the photographs and illustrations in the book.

Last week a small girl came to the garden dressed as Linneaea. She was ecstatic because she was living the fantasy she had dreamed from the book, but very soon she was in tears because so many people wanted to take her picture. They wanted her to be an extension of their own fantasies which had also been established from the worldwide circulation of photographs having little or nothing to do with either Monet or his paintings, and least of all, his garden. I am not sure it is possible to have any original experience of a place whose mythology precedes it and today, that just might mean the whole world.

In the eighteenth century, Carl Linnaeus attempted to organize the whole of the natural world by nomenclature. He developed a method of classification allowing everything its place in evolutionary history. He attempted to establish a comprehensible flow of one thing to the next by the use of words. What he had difficulty with is those breaks or jumps in evolutionary history where the pieces don’t want to fit together. Having Linneaea be the name of the little girl in the garden book might be an ironic accident of nomenclature, but symbolically I saw that little girl as one of the evolutionary jumps her namesake had so much trouble with. I think of her as what Bruce Chatwin calls a ‘watershed creature’, someone whose position in the scheme of things does not fit within the established order. Linneaea was photographed so much because she is our representative in the next jump where we come to nature as pilgrims not participants. All the visitors to the garden are literally led down the primrose path. There is a ‘circuit’ in the garden, something to be walked around. Although the garden visitors may never have been to Tibet to circumambulate Mount Kailash in reverent pilgrimage, but they surely all walk around the prescribed path watching what they think is something about nature and never really understanding their new evolutionary niche as observers and fans. And they will look at whatever artifice can be constructed to remind them of what they think nature used to be.

Utility has its way with Monet's garden. It has an avowed purpose; it is to be looked at. Another child told me *the reason for the garden is to be looked at because it is pretty*. She was right, it is pretty, and it is beautiful. And in this context, even the idea of beauty has a specific utility. Gardens are constructions we use with our eyes. And as such, have an identifiable utility that has only a metaphorical connection with nature's world of unkempt wildness. Again, Fowles, "... *We shall never understand nature (or ourselves), and certainly never respect it, until we disassociate the wild from the notion of utility -- however innocent and harmless the use. For it is the general uselessness of so much of nature that lies at the root of our ancient hostility and indifference to it.*"

THE GARDEN as a CONCEPT :

Mohammed said the Day of Judgment would take place in a garden and that heaven was a green garden. Para - behind, daza - the wall. So if the Persian paradise (para-daza) was a wet, green luxuriousness behind the wall, it was because scorching desert hell of ordinary life was out on the other side. We always create out of what we lack rather than from what we have.

The garden wall is a kind of purgatory transition and exists as an allegorical image that continued with us up until the Renaissance and beyond. In the Middle Ages, the dominant garden form was the cloistered Garth and exclusive domain of the abbeys and then the monasteries. The monastery was itself the garden wall. It formed the transition from the external to the inner world of the cloister's central garden. Once the garden wall has established the boundary of the garden, an emotional order is possible, as one can comprehend the limits of our activity and our responsibility. As a global society, we are having difficulty deciding where, or even if, the garden wall exists at all.

The word garden comes to us from the Teutonic meaning 'to guard,' apparently from somewhere in the time of the crusades. Earlier, at the end of the Roman Empire, villa owners erected stone statues of threatening gods, a kind of sculptural barbed wire, to protect their gardens from damage by vandals. They thought if one statue was good then many were better and soon their gardens were cluttered with statuary. To alleviate the chaos of random statuary and orchestrate some recognizable order, niches were built to the side of the path, and particularly at the ends of the paths,

where special niches were constructed for statues of a god they thought especially adept at protecting gardens. He was always depicted carrying a large club or equipped with a giant erect phallus. His name is 'Termini', hence our word 'Terminus'. The end of the garden path.

In 1625, Francis Bacon, in his famous treatise "On Gardens", said, "Man comes to build stately sooner that to garden finely...as if the latter were the greater perfection." While this clever commentary places a wry smile on the lips of contemporary gardeners, it still fails to come to grips with why we should garden at all. Roberto Burle Marx said, "It is obvious that the concept of a garden goes beyond aesthetic compositions; it also signifies the necessity of men to live intimately with nature." His statement seems closer to identifying why we need a garden. So now we have it, a garden is not just organizing the landscape and the growing of plants, it is rather, to satisfy a *need* to live intimately with nature.

Other than copying the gardens of European and Asian royalty, we Americans have had problems with the "idea" of a garden because America was wilderness without a European cultural history. No castles, monasteries or royalty. We had only a vast and seemingly endless forest. And it was in this forest we made our first and most obvious garden mistake. We assumed, in our desire to rid ourselves of the real danger and claustrophobia of the forest, we must first remove the trees. Aside from the requisite need for building materials and fuel, we simply forgot that "organizing" the landscape could be a subtractive as well as an additive process. Carving a niche in the wilderness meant exactly that. We made one random little extractive chip at a time. It is surprising it never occurred to us harvest selectively and consequently carve meaningful gardens into the existing virgin forest rather than tearing it all out and then finally replanting it all over again in the same place.

We were, however, bright enough to recognize our westward expansion presented us with opportunities to see the land and to see the garden in ways it had not been seen before. Having harvested our way across America, we finally came to places of such awesome power and beauty they led John Muir to see, "signs of redemption in their wildness." The development of these places into national parks became the first public symbols of what we valued as a people and they are clearly the most romantic vision of untouched nature as a garden.

Another form of garden vision, and hauntingly more provocative, is that of the residential garden landscape.

Thomas Church said, "Gardens are for people." His statement is paradoxically simple and yet impossibly inclusive. Simple because it implies the occidental vision of active use like games, walking, eating, etc. It is irritatingly inclusive because it implies the landscape acceptability of the bourgeoisie ideology. Everyone should have their own miniature walled garden. A kind of Jeffersonian democracy gone berserk. This residential middle class miniaturization of royal aspirations has prevented us from adequately exploring some important alternatives in garden design and ultimately (in conjunction with the rise of modernist architecture and sub-divisions) has given rise to gardening that consists primarily of "foundation planting" appearing as an afterthought, a leafy eraser smudge at the bottom of an architect's drawing.

The real question begins to surface here: What form should the residential garden have today and for what reasons? Humphrey Repton believed that the house should contain some of the artificiality of the house and some of the naturalness of the park. The garden was to be a transition from one to the other. This promising idea was cut short by the development of modernist architectural dogma where new construction materials and their revered industrial qualities dominated over any supposed sense of place.

Rather than reinforced concrete, it is possible that plate glass was the material responsible for the development of modern architecture. Certainly the use of large glass areas in residential design gave rise to the idea of the garden as an outdoor room. The garden could be thought of as an extension of architecture. Actually the reverse is true because large glass allows us to see architecture as an extension of the garden. The house became a garden with a roof on it. The house is finally being recognized more appropriately as an extension of the site and not the other way around. It used to be that a garden was a literal and metaphorical extension of the owner's personality and relationship with the natural world.

When Francis Bacon wrote, "Nothing is more pleasant to the eye than green grass finely shorn," he certainly did not foresee Edwin Budding's 1830 invention of a thing called a lawnmower. When the garden again became common or some would even say part of the common purpose we began to have lawn problems. Per square foot, more herbicides and pesticides are used on the American lawn than any other single location on earth. The miniature palaces of the aspiring middle classes did not have access to the sheep that maintained the manor house lawns and our desire for "grass finely shorn" has left us with an army of two-cycle Torros

and weed-eaters droning in the haze. The idea of the lawn has been the concern of scholars like J.B. Jackson, Yi Fu Tuan and Michael Pollan and while there is no doubt about the volume of sociological meaning in the lawn their symbolic references seem to be increasingly irrelevant. Neat and tidy lawns are within nearly every homeowners grasp, but they have become devoid of value. They are superficially easy to deal with and yet consume billions of suburban weekend hours to maintain an outworn and nearly forgotten ideology. They have social meaning but they don't satisfy us.

In 1841 Andrew Jackson Downing published his best-selling treatise on the theory and practice of landscape gardening. Today he would probably have difficulty even getting such a book published. The reason for the change in our perception of the value of the garden was because the garden became someone else's concern. With the rise of the middle class, (including people like Monet), digging in the dirt became a peasant activity. Clemenceau may have come to walk with Monet in his garden and to discuss horticultural concerns, but Monet employed numerous gardeners and I don't think the President of France spent much time packing dirt around Lilly bulbs. The further you could distance yourself from dirt the more value you presented to your community and consequently to society at large. The problem was, and is, that we lost track of some of our basic needs along the way. The continuity of gardens throughout human history proves that our need for continuing and ongoing contact with nature is beyond mere fashion and it is deeply ingrained in our spirit. Our gardens exist as expressive tools of friendship, trust, homage and collective aspiration.

I am not making a case for the naive return to nature movement of the late nineteen 60's, nor am I, like Michael Pollin, suggesting we should all again become gardeners. What I am suggesting is that we should begin to act in response to the fact that we have a need to live intimately with nature. All of us. The sub-division developers, the Greenpeace activists, the industrialists, the newspaper reporters, corrupt politicians and the garbage men. All of us.



Monet's garden is always spoken of in terms of beauty but commerce is what makes the garden grow. The little picnics, the curios, the memento books and posters are all lined up just like the flowers in the garden. The taxis line up in front of the train station and the tourists line up to shovel their money into the garden and the surrounding economy. It took some real entrepreneurship to turn a dilapidated out-of-way bourgeois backyard into a tourist attraction that generates millions of Euros in profit each year.

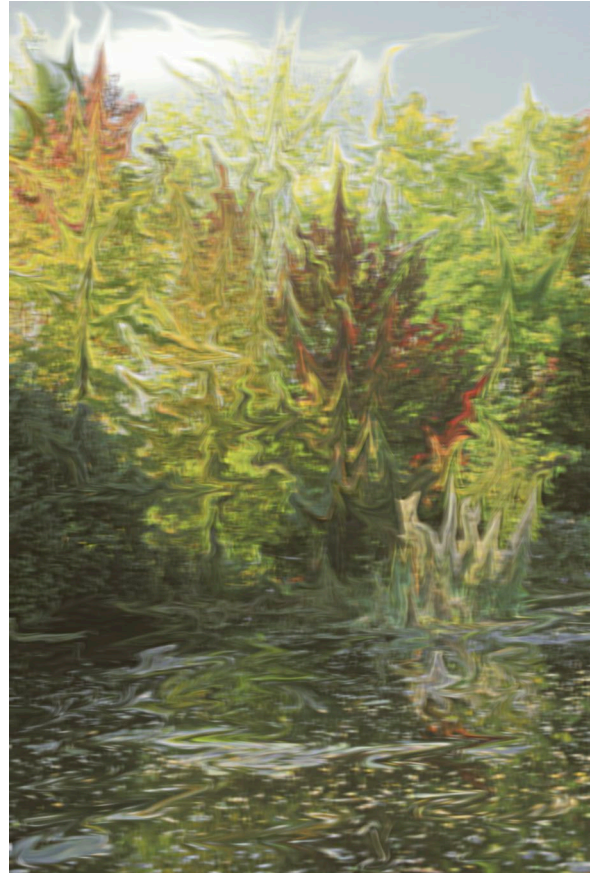


The garden has always been about sex. It is the sex of pollination and flowering. It is the sex of exuberance and immediacy. Positively humming with eroticism and suggestion, the garden seldom shows the old bump and grind, but it *alludes* to it with every flower. Gardens are not wild, they are ordered. Wildness is still a threatening mystery to most of us and sex is the wildest thing we know. Perhaps that is why we have such a hard time thinking of sex as integral to the garden. Another possibility is that we tangle religious puritanism with the science of botany and don't know what to make of the outcome. The old bump and grind is always there, even if we choose to overlook it.



The water garden is really glorious in late Autumn.

The bugs are dead, the tourists are gone. It is a profound and quiet end to the summer glories. Sitting next to this pond in late September is not Zen, but it comes close.



When Monet's career was in full force his cataracts began to grow. Cataracts cause blurred vision, a decreased ability to deal with glare and substantially dulled color vision.

The smeary modified image above may give us some idea of what Monet's color pallet and vision was like for many years. In the years just before he had the cateracts removed he was not painting impressionistically, he was painting what he saw.

Many people have noted his comment on how much blue he saw in the world after the operation. His last paintings (in the Marmottan Monet Museum in Paris) are explosions of vibrant saturated colors and those works lead directly to abstract expressionism. They have nothing to do with the pale muted hues in his celebrated water lilies. When the cataracts came off he saw a new world. The dull and scattered colors in the image above are how Monet might have seen his water garden before the cateracts were removed.



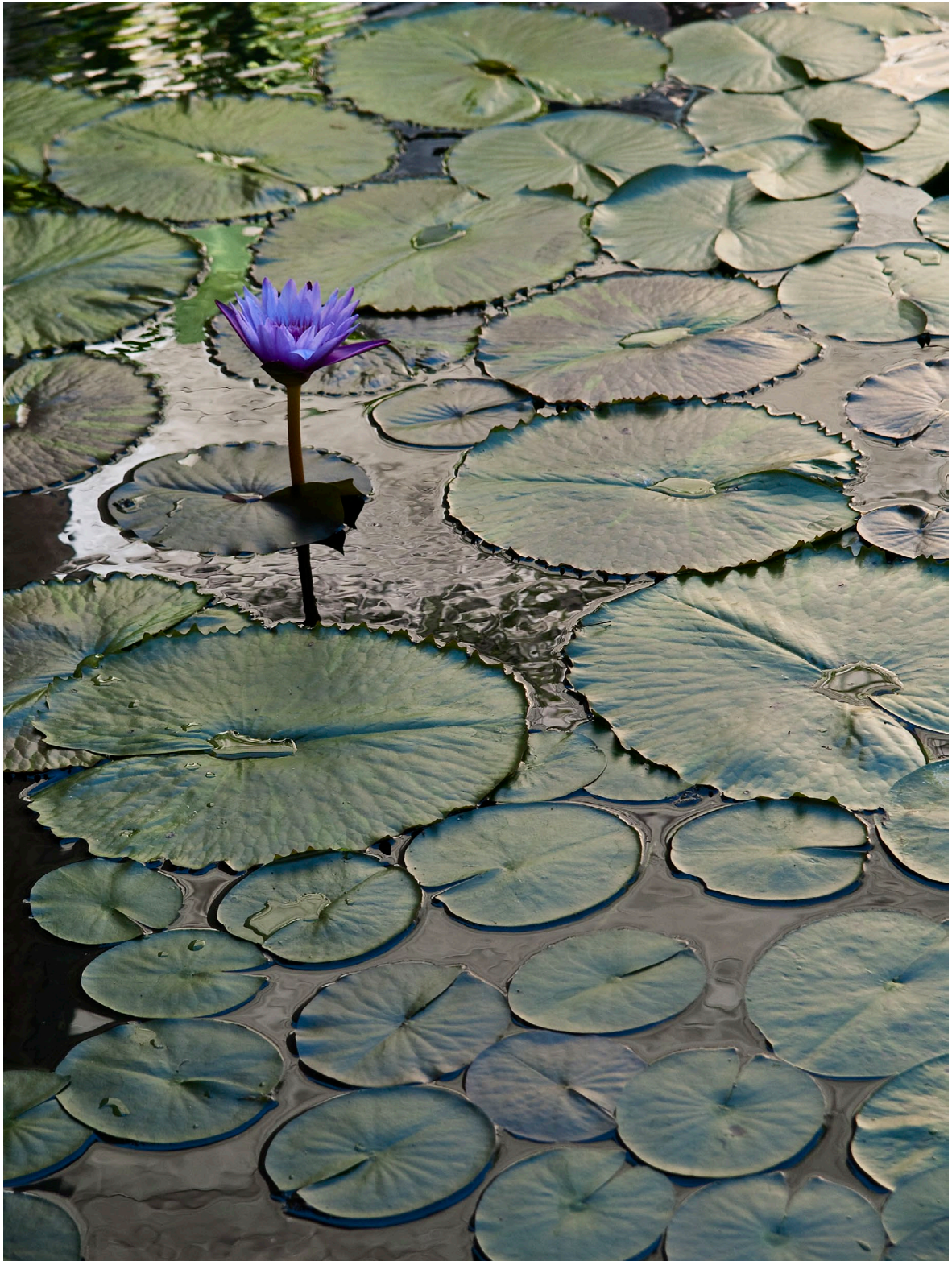
Le Pont Japonais (The Japanese Bridge) 1923-1925

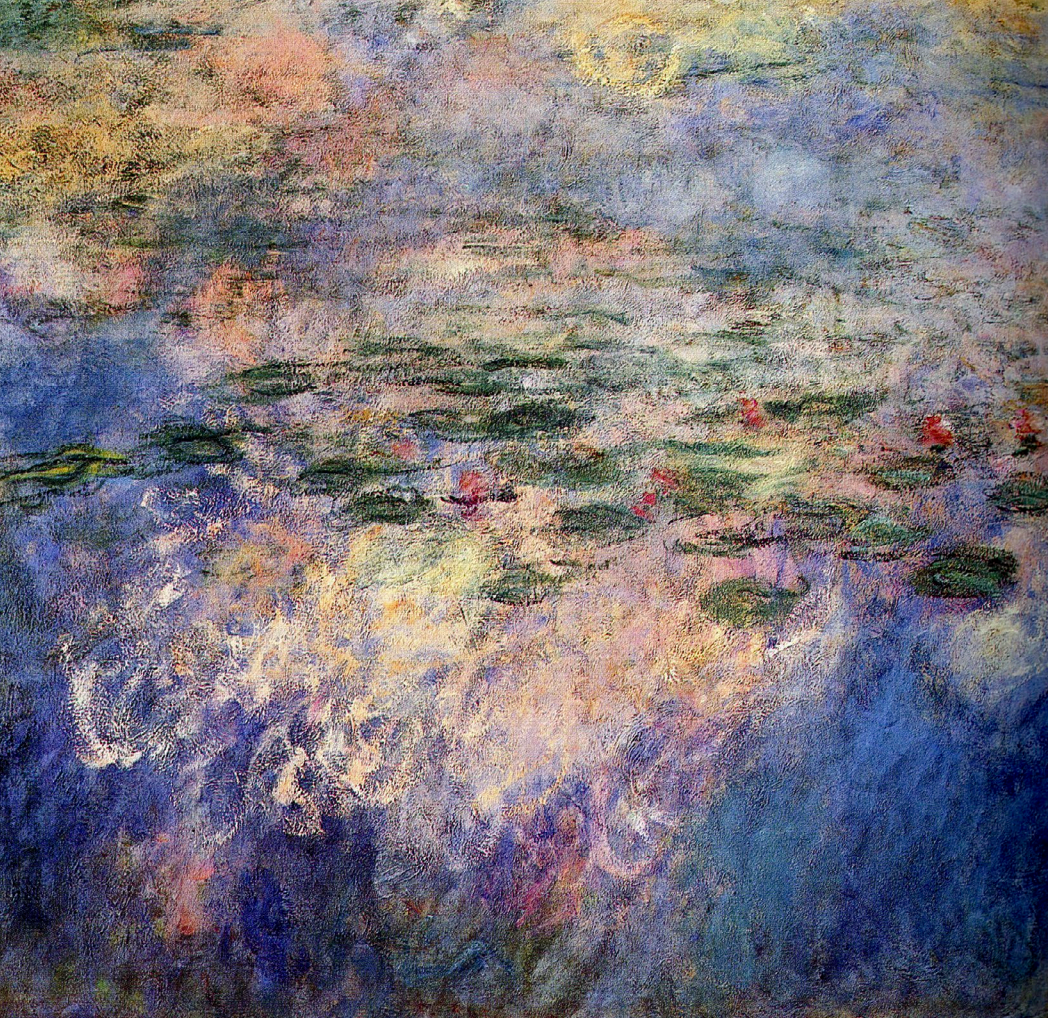
Painted after the removal of Monet's cataracts.

Minneapolis Institute of Art



Much of the allure of a garden pond comes from the fact that it is unreachable. We can't swim in it. We can't do anything with it except look at it. When we look at it the reflections it sends back they confuse and delight us. Part of our attraction to water lilies is that they are distant. You have to admire them from the water's edge. You can't get close enough to them and that makes them even more attractive.

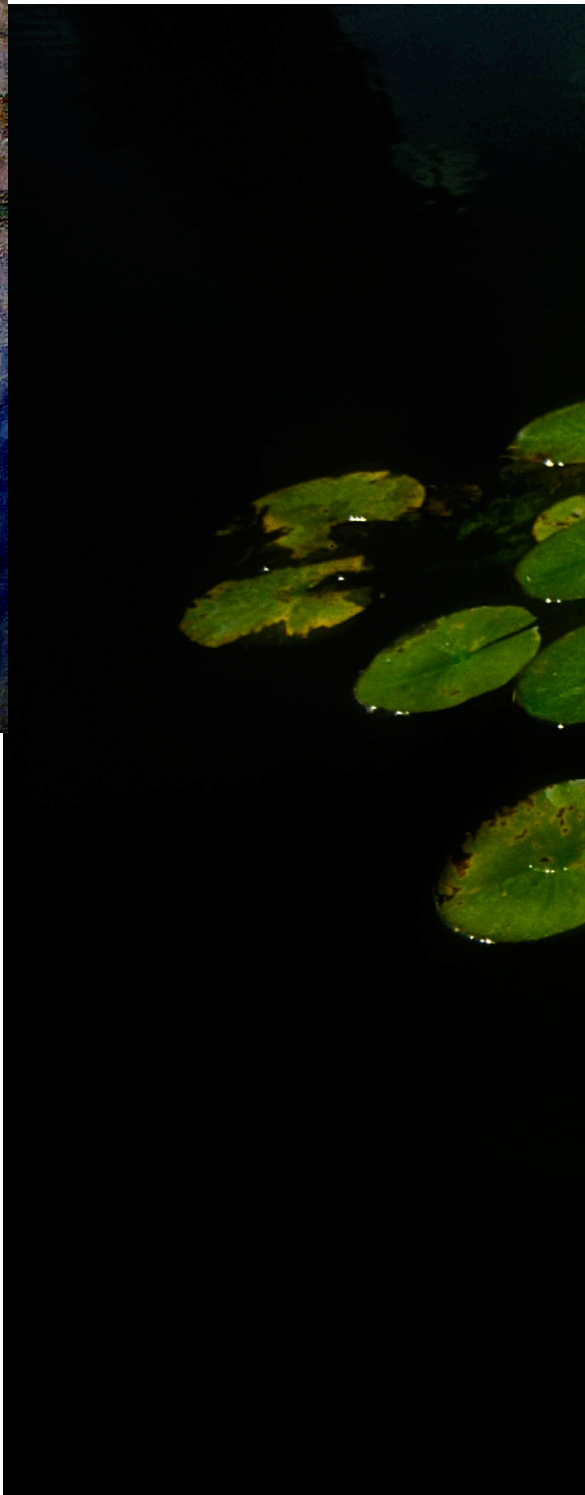


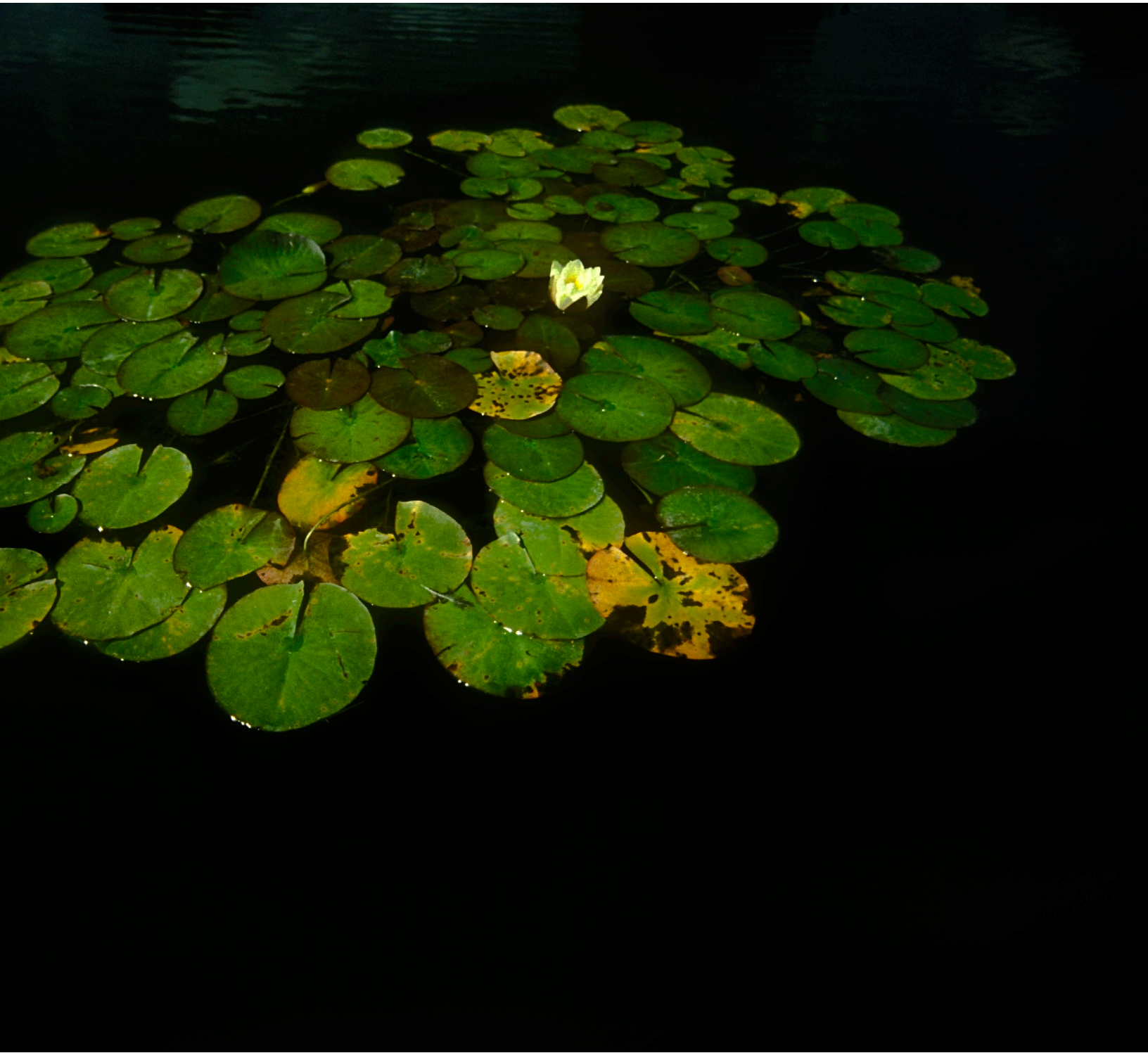


Les Nymphéas (Waterlilies) c. 1920
[A portion of the central panel]
Museum of Modern Art, New York

Like the Lotus, the Water Lily gets its strength from the muck at the bottom and draws beauty to the surface. When that surface is dark, you are looking into deep space rather than a floating plant. The often singular blossom surrounded by flat green islands only heightens the reference to gems and stars.

Note: All the water for Monet's Water Garden is recirculated. The water from the original source, a tributary of the Epte, is far too polluted to use without cleaning and filtration. The water is run through an elaborate system well out of sight of the tourist. French rivers are still sewers, no matter how scenic, they are filthy and it does not seem likely they will ever be cleaned up.





Contemporary garden designers need to re-investigate a diversity of ideas about the garden, including the value of ritual and ceremony. To understand a parade is to understand the ritual of the street. Parks and gardens too, contain their own rituals. Visual imagery in gardens has long been stuck in things botanical. The value of mere collections has not retained the value it had in the Victorian Era. The quality of a garden experience is not predicated upon botanical nomenclature or classification. We have confused our passion for pigeonholing with the value of the natural experience and our vision has suffered in the process. To name a tree is not to know it. The map is not the terrain.

Gardens are not about working with plants, they are about making decisions. The essential elements of decision making in the garden can be reduced to three:

Selection is the strangest of all, not only because it is intuitive, but also because it is irrational at many levels. How is it that we are able to decide what to include and what to leave out? A garden can be considered as a whole or it can be considered a collection of parts. It is very difficult to hold both those visions simultaneously. Even the holistic thinker must eventually make a decision about what stays and what goes. Selection also presupposes some form of a vision of the future condition of the garden and it makes little difference whether that vision is vague or severe, but a specific vision is certainly there. The French have the expression, *'Mener une vie de bâton de chaise,'* and it means to have a life of chaotic and crossed purposes. Our understanding of gardens, particularly what it is we select to be installed in the garden, often has that same life of multiple and often conflicting desires.

Nurturance is the idea where the effort and the consequences of our selection process become visible in place and in time. How is it that we decide how much effort is the right amount to put into a plant (or a whole garden for that matter) before we just give up on it completely? Before we consign the plant to the compost heap to let it rot we hope the understanding we gained from attempting to nourish that particular plant would somehow help us to better understand what to do in the future. We hope that the physical elements, the chemical reality of that dead plant will nurture other plants in the future. How is it that we decide a plant or even a whole community of plants is no longer worth our assistance? When is it we decide to attempt transplanting something to another place in the garden? As if to admit our initial selection of relationships was some how wrong? And what is it that allows us to

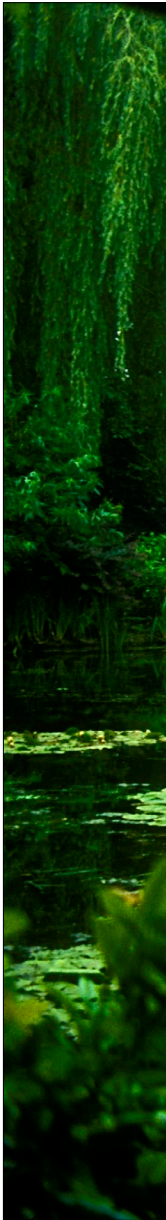
trust those decisions? In Monet's garden, since it is no longer his garden, there are a series of signs saying:

"Pour l'agrément de tous RESPECTEZ et FAITES RESPECTER Gazons et Plantations. Merci."

It means: "For the enjoyment of everyone, you must respect and see to it that others respect the lawns and plants. Thanks."

Now, just how is it that we are to "see to it that others respect the lawns and plants"? Other than not killing them or trampling them out of existence, what does it really mean to respect plants? I think it means to tend them. To fiddle with them, and to assist them in their growth, so that we can watch them flourish. Some where down at the bottom of this respect issue is our own voyeuristic self-indulgence, not any real interest in the welfare of the plant. It is our aesthetics we are satisfying.

Change is the place least attractive to those who hold a fixed picture of the way a garden should be or look. Yet change provides the strongest and most compelling reason for nurturance in the first place. Not in the sense of resisting change, but rather nurturance seems to find its roots in guiding and directing change. It carries with it a distinct whiff of resignation. (At least if one holds on to a particular "vision" or impression.) [One of the best things about Monet's understanding of his garden is that selection and nurturance contain the idea of multiple 'impressions' or changing visions.]







“The island of poplars,” with Rousseau’s inaccessible stone tomb. It was designed by marquis René Louis de Girardin.

Ermenonville, France

This October is the monthly icon for our position in the waning years of the 20th century. The time of the tenth month is only a slim edge past the middle but while walking in the morning mist, the chronology of French latitudes presses a quiver of autumn into whatever is left of my senses. It is a first level experience. The feeling is somehow primary and immediate. It is not about understanding, it is knowing. Some things we simply get and autumn is one of them.

In the days of obvious summer, things were different, but the horse-chestnut leaf margins are brown now and have given their discreet chronological message to those of us pretending to be visually anchored. It is not simply a change of the seasons. The secret is this: The hallucinogenic summer of the industrial era is on the wane. Obvious, you say. C'est evident. It is, perhaps, obvious, but precious little has been suggested about what methods we might have available to continue into the next millennium with any dignity. Obvious has the same root as oblivion and in the waning days of September, I have been a pilgrim, voyaging with map and compass for a promising route.

Thousands before me have marked the path of my pilgrimage. Historians, buses, road signs and Le Guide Michelin led me to some old French places and ideas that I wanted to think about again. The town of Ermenonville had arrived at the top of my list.

Ermenonville is perceived by most tourists (and perhaps even most French) as a small town near an amusement park. The amusement park is on the grounds of a once grand but now dilapidated chateau. They were both originally located there because of an inland dune formation in the midst of a pine forest. Mer de Sable means 'sea of sand' and it is indeed a sea. The sand may have been the initial attraction, but now the droves of tourists arrive for Ferris wheel rides, cheap candy and picnics. The sand, the first and primary reason for coming to this unusual place, has become a backdrop for the glitter and lights of the amusement park. Certainly some now consider the sand a nuisance while our former primary relationship with nature slides into the artificial, subservient, and fatigued. The status of nature at Ermenonville is an interesting anomaly, a minor irritation, something you brush from your shoes before you get back in your car.

The town of Ermenonville is like thousands of others in France. It has another chateau, which has become a hotel and a restaurant with three stars. Like most tourists and even many pilgrims, I went with eyes so intent on what I wanted to see; I had no room in my

perception for the town itself. I wanted to "know" how to get to a "specific place" Perhaps I even wanted a pre-conceived set of feelings. But when I arrived at my destination, the Parc Jean-Jacques Rousseau, I found it was closed, for lunch.

Lunch is a form of religion in France and everything not connected to food closes from noon to two o'clock. I had a hunger for vision, not food and I walked the periphery of the closed park until I found a hole in the fence. My intent was contemplative and photographic. Both of them would certainly occur with more clarity if I could wander without the crowds I imagined arriving after lunch. Coming down a small hill, I found the path around the lake and followed it until I could see the island of Rousseau's tomb.

After all this time, the tomb is still on an island. Something in my pessimism allowed me to imagine a public discontented with contemplating anything from a distance, feeling they had been cheated, as though proximity were a form of possession. I thought the island might have a bridge or causeway to allow teeming hordes of pedestrian pilgrims. When I arrived at the shore, I was thankful there was no bridge. The tomb itself is a rather simple stone affair, even looking a little makeshift, surrounded by tall, unmown grasses. I imagined a gardener in a rowboat heading toward the island with a lawn mower and a gas can hanging out the back. The gardener rowing slowly and mumbling something to himself about the fact that Rousseau's body is in the Pantheon with all the other heroes. "Why do I have to go mow the damn lawn around a tomb with nobody even in it?" By itself, the stone marker has little importance except in concert with the adjacent green sentinel poplar trees, planted on the island perimeter at regular intervals. They shimmered in the vertical light of noon.

All Poplars reside comfortably inside the genus *Salix* and while they love the land, they love it most as 'riverains' or 'residents by the stream'. Certainly they are well suited to their location on the Island. They are the particular variety of poplar known as 'Lombardy' and since these trees are not native to Ermenonville, I mused about the selection of this particular tree. I wondered if I knew so little of French history that it was possible for France to have once controlled the portion of Italy where these trees originated. Or was it simply more important to have their stylized non-native and un-natural verticality mark with exuberance and vitality, the tomb of a champion of all things natural.

I had no real solution to my musings, but was content to sit in quiet solitude at the water edge and I thought about what Rousseau meant.

The poetry of metaphor blossoms most beautifully in times of censorship and the time of Rousseau was no exception. Varying interpretations of the written word have stayed more than one gallows rope and many centuries later, those variations do not make my understanding any easier. If I understand anything about what Rousseau meant, it can be distilled to this: God resides in the natural world. And if God resides in the natural world, we then, have no need of the monarchy as being Gods' messengers, because we have access to the natural world ourselves.

The problem with perception is selectivity and our perception has certainly been selective when it comes to Rousseau. The only part we have listened to and manifested in our actions is that we don't need a monarchy. We specifically and conveniently forgot the part about God residing in the natural world. Either that or we don't believe in God anymore.

I am specifically unwilling and unable to provide any serious speculation as to whether or not we any longer believe in God. I am willing to posit we have a spiritual need, a need to believe in something outside ourselves. Our need is founded in an underlying desire to value the continuity of human existence. And while that need has more incidental and anthropocentric value, it just may be something to help us hang on.

If one were to ask, "Is there any inherent value in human existence?" I would say no. Simply for the sake of this pilgrimage, my emotional investigation into what is next for our cult of Western civilization, we might begin by realizing the efficacy of Rousseau's ideas was to develop the middle class. We finally had an excuse for something other than princes and peasants. Others have said his ideas lead to development of the Romantics and eventually to National Parks and other organizations like The Nature Conservancy. However, the sheer uncontested volume of effort dedicated to the evolution of the middle class so far outweighs any notions of respect for nature, the scale is pathetically unbalanced.

Just what is it we can do about this paucity of balance and finally begin to value our own existence in a way that will tip the scale back toward nature?

The 'Island of Poplars' is an artificial construct. The lake around it and the stone of the tomb are things we have taken from nature and modified to suit our needs. The poplars were planted. In fact, as poplars are one of the fastest growing species, since the time of Rousseau, they have been planted over and over again. They are not nature, but they are natural. They have been tended and maintained. All that attention and care over the centuries may hold some of the key.

At the moment, the problem with completely accepting the garden as a model for our interaction with nature presents some very tangled relationships. The garden is a place where nature dominates the landscape. Clearly our behavior over the last millennium indicates we humans are interested in dominating nature. The gardener lives at the edge of the garden, or even some distance away, but almost never in it. It is an issue of proportion.

If we look from the vantage point of a spacecraft, only two human endeavors have made significant enough impact to be easily seen by the unaided eye on the surface of the Earth. One is the Great Wall of China. The other is the Grid of Farms in the American Midwest. We might do well to realize the image of the garden is already extant in our relationship with nature, but the scale of that gardening is now global. Voltaire's final statement in 'Candide' is, "We must cultivate our garden." It is time we get on with that task.

If, God is in nature, and, if we respect God, or even if we respect our need for spirituality then we need to develop ways to demonstrate our respect. I suggest we begin by realizing we need to live intimately with nature and that our individual gardening efforts have had pathetically little effect on what society does as a whole. We may need to establish political systems that are held accountable for demonstrating their ability in attending to that specific need.

I am not making a case for another layer of bureaucracy. We do not need nature review boards. We have arrived at a point where what we need is a system that is specifically weighted toward nature. We need a moral code and ethical laws reflecting our needs in regard to our relationship with nature. I suggest that we might begin the process by abolishing the idea that ownership of land confers the right to do anything with it the owner sees fit. And finally, I suggest we prevent any proposed project from proceeding until it is capable of demonstrating how the project will enhance the quality of our individual and collective need to live intimately with nature. If we have the right to be happy and we know living intimately with nature contributes to that happiness, we need to promote the position that we have a right to an intimate relation with nature and that anything that prevents or impedes that relationship is a violation of our rights.

I disagree with scientists and economists who view nature as a commodity or a service or through logic and reason believe nature to be separate from us. Nature is un-reasonable and we humans are one of the most powerful and un-reasonable parts of it. It is historically naive to view the world other than a garden because we have treated it as such since the beginning of agriculture. The problem is not with the garden; rather it is with the gardeners. The value civilization places on nature is proportional to how bad non-nature is. At the moment, our cities and all our non-nature are pretty horrid. Consequently, the value of nature is increasing and it will soon be the most valuable thing of all.

SAINT SEBASTIAN

VII

Sevent

THE SAINT SEBASTIAN PROJECT



Saint Sebastian was considered the protector against the plague and Mantegna had recovered from the plague. His painting is a gesture of homage for his recovery.

Giverny is a terribly small town. Even with a world famous garden across the street there comes a time when it is absolutely necessary to escape the village life, to run to the chaos of the city and explore the museums of Paris.

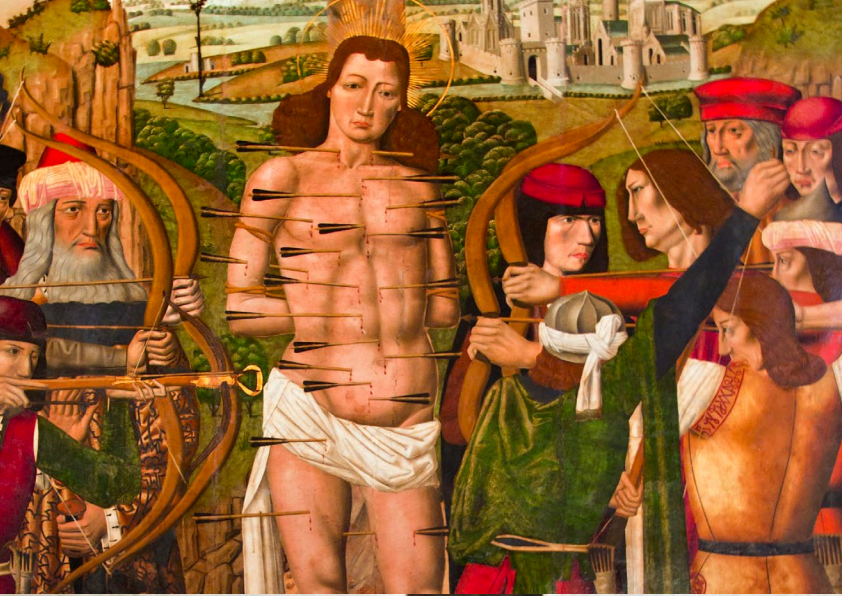
An hour by commuter train and I was back amongst the throng. Passing thru such delightful spots as Bonnières-sur-Seine, where Monet used to keep a small boat as a marine painting studio and where the locals would maliciously cut his mooring line and let him drift down stream. The train passes through Mantes-la-Jolie, (Mantes, the beautiful) where Flaubert had trysts with his mistress and I am sure he thought it beautiful then but if he saw it today he would think he was in a concrete hell, more reminiscent of a North African slum than his France of the 19th century. Then again, all things are not perfect in Normandy just because you live across the street from a beautiful garden.

The musée du Louvre is where the word *too* was invented. It is too much, too big, too impressive, too grand and too tiring. Thank God it is there.

My friend Paul Gardère once told me he would only go with me to the Louvre if we only looked at 14th century ivory miniatures. Attempting to see more was simply overload. Of course I would overlook his advice and still wander aimlessly; and for a time, I stood quietly in front of Andre Mantegna's painting of Saint Sebastian.

His pose is called *contrapposto*, which I think means 'against a post', which I think fits with what he is doing, but art historians will scream about this interpretation. Another Mantegna painting of Saint Sebastian is in the Kunsthistorisches museum in Vienna and has a much more languid pose. In that painting he also has an arrow directly in his forehead. The number and direction of his arrows varies enormously. In Venice there is a later painting that has arrows galore and a lot more pained expression on his face. There appear to be thousands of renditions of St. Sebastian in museums throughout the world. And I began to wonder what was his story.

The following pages are images of paintings of Saint Sebastian. Many were collected surreptitiously in museums where they commonly prohibit photography. The painting by Goya in the Prado Museum has three arrows, others have only one, some have more than twenty.











Even though this painter seems more intent on rendering the fanny of the archer with red pants than getting Sebastian's eyes straight, we can still be astounded by the number and direction of the arrows. The real questions here are: How did the archers keep from hitting the other archers in such a crossfire and, did it really take twenty-one arrows to kill someone tied to a column?

Sedano, Alonso and Terrencs, Pere (XV cent)

Museu de la Catedral, Mallorca

The legend of Saint Sebastian is a bit complicated because there are conflicting versions, but there seems to be general agreement on the following:

He was born in Narbonne, Gaul (France). He became a soldier in the Roman army at Rome in about 283, and seems to have spent considerable time promoting Christianity. He is supposed to have cured his wife of deafness and cured the gout of a Roman Prefect.

Sebastian was named captain in the Praetorian Guards by the Emperor Diocletian. During an Imperial persecution of the Christians it was discovered that Sebastian was indeed a Christian, and he was ordered to be executed. He was tied to a column and shot with arrows and left for dead, but when the widow of St. Castulus went to recover his body, she found he was still alive and nursed him back to health. They pulled out the arrows and he lived.

He was a very lucky fellow, but as it turns out, not very bright, because after he became healthy again, he re-enlisted in the army. After a short time he was again discovered to be a Christian and, as one story has it, Diocletian promptly had Sebastian's head cut off. Hence the Saint.

St. Sebastian is considered the patron saint of archers,
(Now there's an irony!)

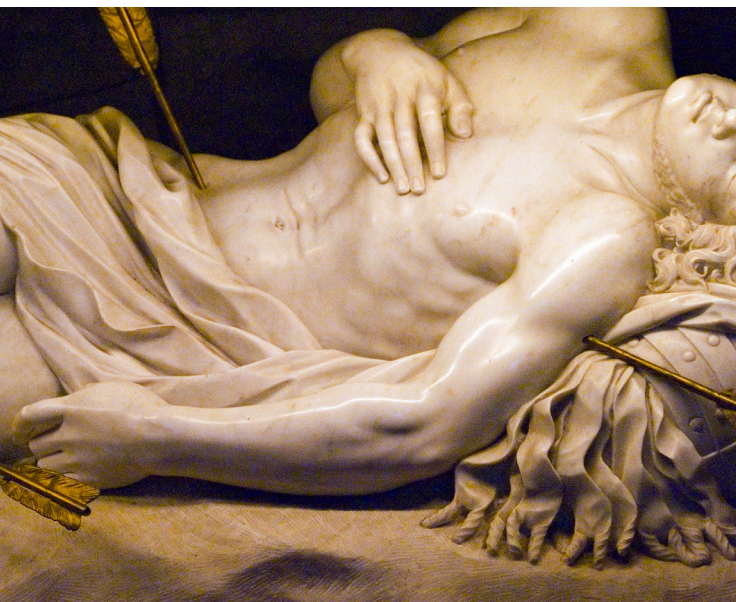
He is also the patron saint of soldiers because he was a tough soldier and because he is purported to have cured many diseases, he is appealed to for protection against plagues.

Immediately adjacent to the Eastern edge of Monet's water garden is a plantation of poplar trees. They are columnar cottonwood trees and are planted in strict rows and just look like the trees adjacent to Rousseau's tomb. The difference is that these trees are agriculture. They are planted as a crop and intend to be harvested. Specifically monoculture with none of the visual interest or diversity of either a forest or Monet's garden. The edge of Monet's garden has been carefully planted and screened so as to distract the visitor and have their attention directed inward to the garden.

Sitting on a certain bench in the garden it is possible to see the rows of trees and to glance at the garden at almost the same time. This comparison may help understand why there is a relationship between what happened to Saint Sebastian and the idea of a garden as a *mediator* between us and the natural world.

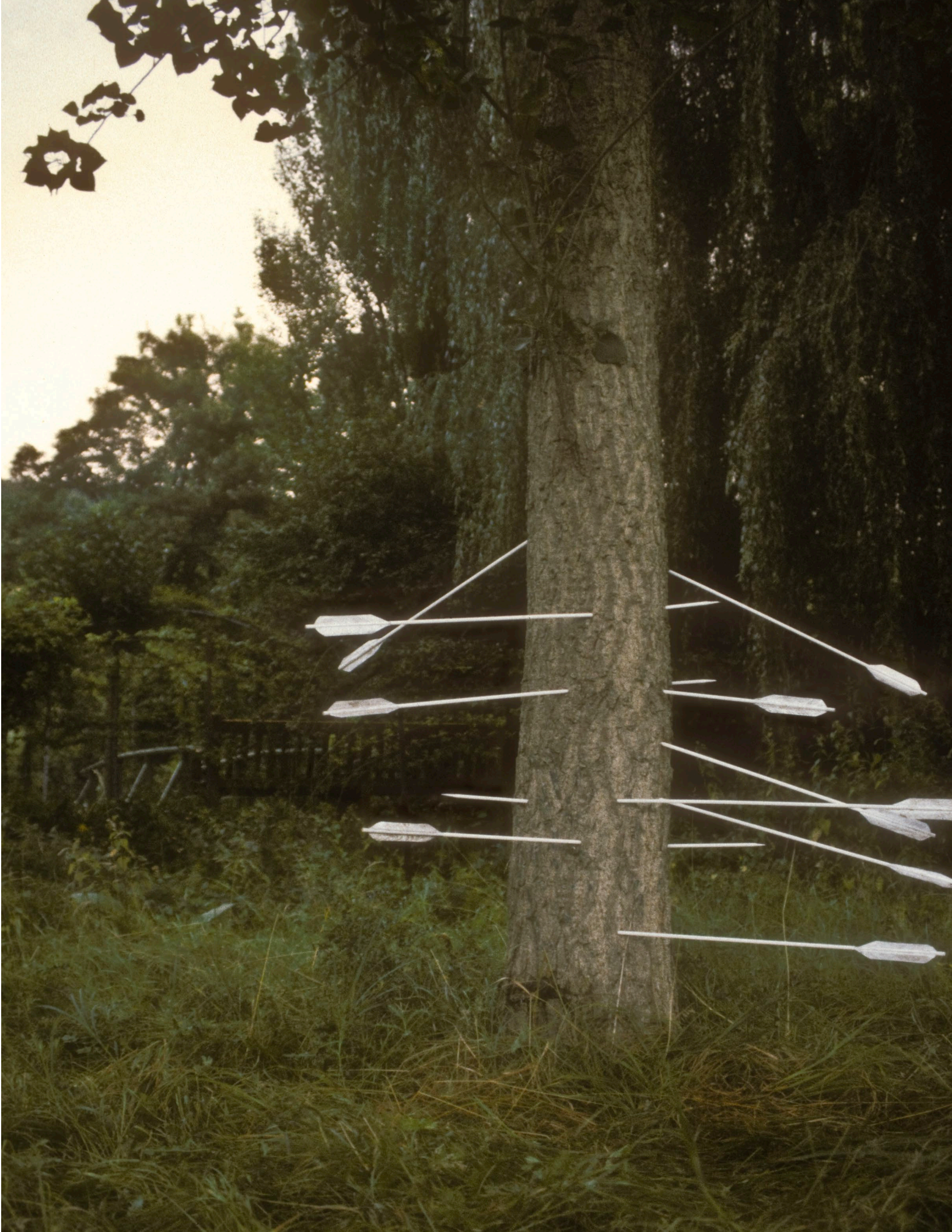
Sebastian got shot full of arrows. His friends pulled the arrows out and he got healthy again. *Nature has been shot full of arrows by us. We have raped pillaged and plundered. And if we just pull out even some of the arrows and leave it alone, nature will get better.*

Sebastian didn't have to reenlist. He could have just left it alone. He could have thrived. The garden, like Sebastian, needs help from friends to thrive. Since nature is no longer overwhelming, we are the only ones around to be friends and help. We need to take some of the arrows out that we have shot into nature and then watch it heal. We do, indeed, need to "tend our own garden." And a lot of the rest we just need to leave alone.



The poplar trees planted next to Monet's garden will be made into toilet paper. It will be a very nude and bald spot when the trees are harvested. In the mean time, the trees can be a symbol of how much we use nature and how it might do better if we left a lot more of it alone.

This single poplar tree is part of that plantation and is just outside Monet's Garden. After consulting with botanists, *The author, shot this poplar, this Saint Sebastian Tree, full of arrows, and if we leave it alone, it too, is going to survive.*





Nature left alone: Vines do have a way with windows.

Santa Sabina Aventine
Rome



Can we hope that nature is not completely out of whack because of our meddling? If we just got out of the way for a while a lot of wounds might heal up. Is not that the work of time?

Paros, Grece



When the most recent Balkan War stopped, the plants took over.

Zagreb, Croatia



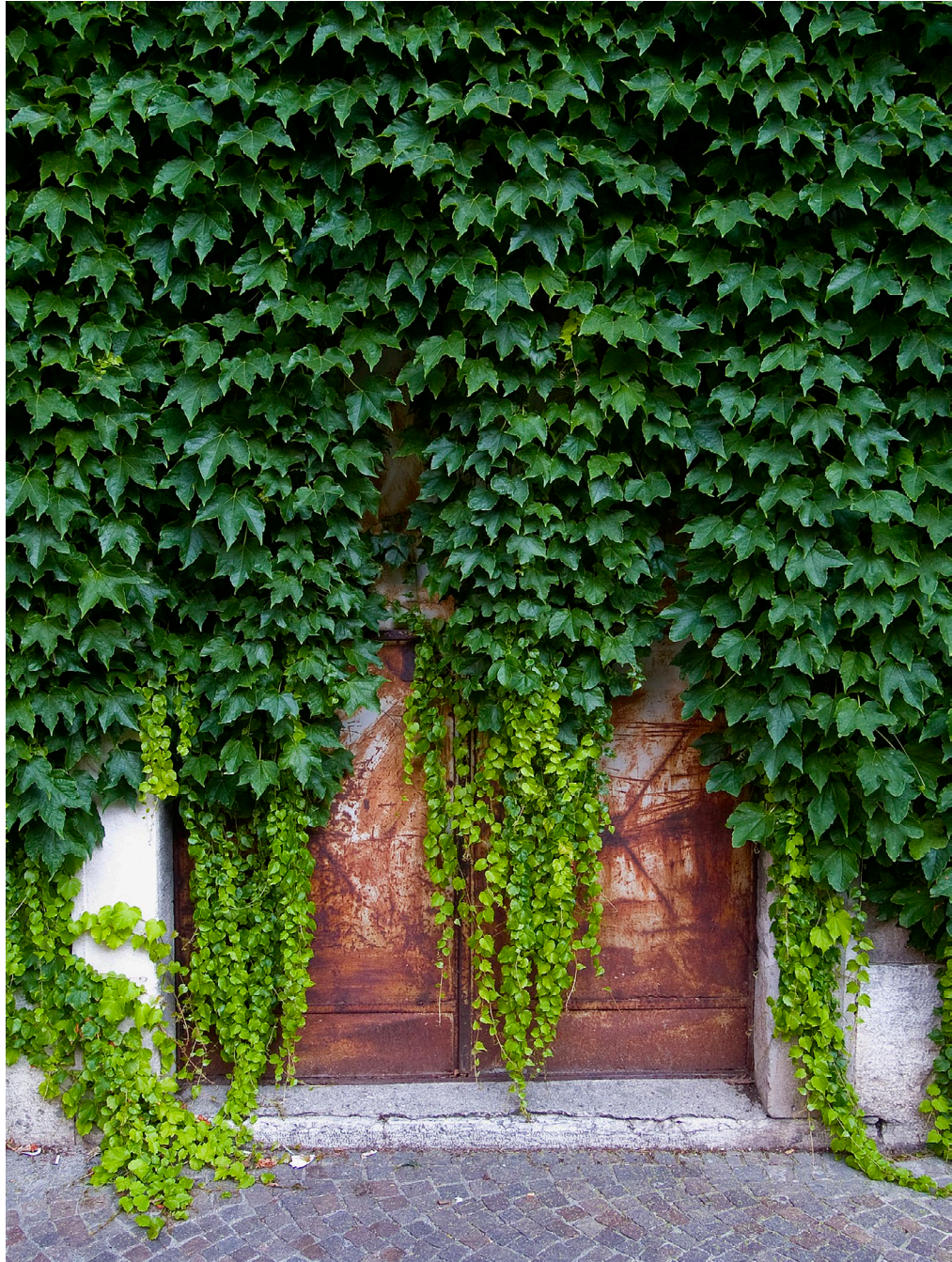
Gardeners are obsessed with control, but even they know it is a losing battle.
No, Mr. Wilkins, you don't need to trim this hedge any more. It is going to outlast you. Just give it up.

South Island, New Zealand



This deer has a lot more broken than one ear. It is a broken promise. It is an attempt to make up for the loss of the real deer that used to wander here. It is a concrete votive offering, hoping the real deer will return someday.

Central California



There is a small crack in my driveway and grass continually sprouts from the crack. Every time I pass by I want to cheer for the grass. I want the grass to take over the driveway. Like in the photo above, I want to say, 'Go ahead vines, eat this building.'

Skagen, Denmark



The Saint Sebastian Tree, just outside Monet's Garden

We have certainly done terrible things to the natural world. Now the question is what to do about it? Nature, like Saint Sebastian, has been shot. If we just stop shooting it full of arrows nature might be able to heal itself. We may even have to remove some of the previous arrows, but if we stop terrorizing nature, it might just survive and perhaps even thrive.

The GARDEN and all the ideas that go along with it might just survive too. We will always have to tend our garden.



Gary Dwyer had a long career as a sculptor before ever getting serious about photography. In 1991 he photographed the Botanical Survey Project on **Baffin Island, Northwest Territories in the Canadian Arctic** and in 1994 documented **World Heritage Sites for UNESCO in Vietnam**. In 2005 he was Visiting Artist at the **American Academy in Rome** where he photographed Architectural Heritage for the **World Monuments Fund**.

His work has been exhibited at the **Corcoran Gallery in Washington, DC**, the **Oakland Museum in California**, and is in the permanent collection of **La Maison Européenne de la Photographie and Bibliotheque Nationale de France in Paris**. In 2007 his work was shown at Fotonoviembre, IX Bienal in Tenerife, Canary Islands, Spain and he received honorable mention at **PX3 Prix De La Photographie, Paris**. In 2008 his work was included in *Images'08 Vevey, Switzerland* and *La Biennale Internationale de l'image, Nancy, France* and published in the book 'Best of Photography 2009.'

He is Professor Emeritus of Landscape Architecture at Cal Poly State University and he lived across the street from Claude Monet's house for a long time. He has never been a gardener.

“An adventure is misery and discomfort relived in the leisure and forgetfulness of distance.” - Marco Polo

Thanks to Claude Monet

The writing of a book is often a process of reflection. Reflection can be a form of refinement. Not where things are distilled, but where murky abstractions come back to us in the way we actually perceived that moment in the distant past. Trying to remember a person and a time is an act of impressionism. What was stamped on us is our impression and it will not leave. Our impressions have been unfairly described as inaccurate, muddled and vague. The exact opposite is true. They are all we have and what we carry forward. Our own lives are muddy waters seen through fading light. How could we expect the reflection we see in a mirror to be any less truthful.

<http://www.garydwyerphotography.com>



Our relationship with the natural world has been in the dumpster for quite a while.

Gary Dwyer uses his photographs to investigate our relationship with nature by looking at what we think is a **GARDEN.**

He lived at the garden of **Claude Monet** for quite some time.

He is only a passing acquaintance of Saint Sebastian.

