The Architecture of the Profane

Dylan Forester

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THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE PROFANE

Dylan Forester

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

4-5: DISPERSION
6-7: CONTENTION
8-19: SECULARISM IN AMERICA: A BRIEF HISTORY
20-35: IDENTIFYING THE PROFANE
36-39: THE GARDEN
40-61: THE HUMANIST GARDEN
62-83: THE ENGLISH LANDSCAPE GARDEN
84-101: BOSTON: CITY UPON THE HILL
102-121: SITE PROPOSAL
122-131: PROGRAMMING THE GARDEN
132-139: SPECULATION
140-169: REALIZATION
170-171: BIBLIOGRAPHY
Now the whole earth had one language and the same words. And as people migrated from the east, they found a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. And they said to one another, “Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly.” And they had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar. Then they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be dispersed over the face of the whole earth.” And the LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of man had built. And the LORD said, “Behold, they are one people, and they have all one language, and this is only the beginning of what they will do. And nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and there confuse their language, so that they may not understand one another’s speech.” So the LORD dispersed them from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. Therefore its name was called Babel, because there the LORD confused[a] the language of all the earth. And from there the LORD dispersed them over the face of all the earth.
The fastest growing religious identification in the United States is no religion at all.

Since the introduction of the American Religious Identification Survey (ARIS) in 1990, the proportion of Americans who do not associate themselves with any religion has risen from 7 percent to 15 percent – approximately 34,000,000 Americans. This split from traditional religious doctrines and towards a more complex and secular-minded American society is representative of major societal forces that have remolded symbolic boundaries and restructured American religion as we know it. Through advancements in science and technology, rising levels of higher education, increased values of individual freedom and material success, and a more secular system of government, the symbolic boundaries that had once reinforced the significance of religion have been diminished. Consequently, these developments have rendered our contemporary society – especially within the American city - more progressive than it was in the early 20th century, replacing the urban dwellers' traditional attitudes toward theology and the scriptures with a more transcendental and profane mindset – ultimately redefining what we hold as sacred.

I contend that it is vital to understand this shift in the role of secularization in order to anticipate what the implications of such changes will be for an ever-growing secular-minded society in the future. Furthermore, it is my contention that this movement must be realized through a new nondenominational architecture – a spatial manifestation that provides a universal setting for both contemplative and spiritual action; a sanctuary that provokes the tension between singularity and multiplicity.

The endeavor is not intended to refute or deny the power of previous rituals and sacred spaces. Since religious organizations are never just reactive but are dynamic in nature, there is much to be learned from American religion’s capacity to adapt. The continuously evolving realm of public religion and sacred spaces that have supported numerous cultures across history gives testament to this phenomenon – not only is public religion a byproduct of its social context but its context has the ability to manifest itself as a significant feature of its content. This adaptability and prospect for change will conceptually drive the program (and reprogrammable nature) of the project.

The issue of identity is then crucial – to label, or give definition to, a population that does not subscribe to an organized religion is as hopeless as it is contradictory to the ambitions of the project. Thus, a sense of identity, the desire for collectivity, destroying the construct of authority, and the evasion of religious trappings – are all matters of contention. How can this architecture become a vehicle for universal ritual? How can we define the public sphere for a stratified, divided public? How does one produce a sacred place for a secular constituency?

The project will be conceived of as a set of dual gardens – a compound mechanism for both the individual and the collective that grounds one with the natural world. While one ‘garden’ constructs a place | landscape interrupted by moments for individual introspection (a contemporary interpretation of the English garden), the other provides an envelope for collective and confrontational action – conceptually, a 21st century Humanist garden structured as a critique of the American city in which it is situated. The interdependent relationship between both publics is critical to the conceptual and architectural intentions of the project.

The symbolic agendas driving the architecture will produce a space that is the byproduct of its layered and stratiﬁed context, a space as enigmatic as that which was achieved by the Pantheon in Rome over 2,000 years ago. While the space – a synthesis of physical and cultural conditions that have restructured America’s religious identity - serves as the destination of the project, it will act as a sacred marker amidst a larger, more complex public realm. The signiﬁcance of this public realm is predicated on the belief that “our identities are related to the sense of belonging to a place”, which thus stimulates the need for a dynamic experience in which the individual might challenge presumptions about sacrality and belief in order to understand his or her own identity. This place is one that is neither controlled nor deﬁned; a tabula rasa that is ‘consecrated’ through the ritual of the profane.

The challenge then becomes: how to identify secular understandings of the sacred? And, even more signiﬁcantly, how to construct a universal place of worship through a nondenominational architecture?
SECULARISM IN AMERICA: A BRIEF HISTORY
EXODUS OF THE ISRAELITES
MIGRATION
In some perspectives the New World was a consequence of religious motivation; an amalgam of Puritan immigrants searching for ideological refuge – a place – to express their own religious beliefs in the 17th century. If migration was the process of removal from authority and oppression, then colonial America was the vehicle for freedom. The “American Way” soon came to be defined as the Protestant ethic, triggering the organization of their churches – and the propagation of their creed – throughout the new nation (Kosmin 20).

THE INDIVIDUAL
The Puritan society slowly dissolved by the beginning of the 18th century, leaving behind biblical symbols and metaphors that would later be embraced by prominent intellectuals at the time – a coalition of liberal Deists who retained a limited perception of God as their “Prime Mover”5. For intellectuals such as Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson, God was present but not hold supremacy over the power of the individual.

Emphasis on individual rights and liberties kept the divine power at a safe distance while Congregationalist churches were planted, signifying a departure from the former Protestant denominations. Their political influences, however, were kept in check. The concept of separation of church and state was introduced to the American public with the arrival of Baptist Roger Williams, founder of the colony of Rhode Island, giving individuals the right to choose their own religious path. Individual freedom was protected, and religious diversity emerged. This newly found liberation in the New World set itself apart from the monolithic church of the colonists’ mother country through its promotion of individual beliefs within the larger collective religion of American society – a religion in which secular values were still maintained6.

SECULARISM
Despite its upbringing the United States continues to be regarded as “the most religious country in Christendom”7. This truth paradoxically stems from the fact that the United States government was not founded in the Christian religion but was, in fact, founded in secularism8. The adoption of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution in 1789 gives testament to the secular underpinnings of our nation’s (varied) identity:

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”

In preventing the religious codification of the New World the Founding Fathers hoped to establish a universal society through which multitude of religious beliefs might coexist from state to state. Such idealization reflected the new democracy through which Americans had hoped to set their governing authorities apart from their neighbors in Europe, a land corrupted by religious battles and persecutions9.

The country’s interest in maintaining a universal, secular framework was reaffirmed in the terms of the 1796 Treaty with Tripoli, under which president George Washington held that no religious intent existed in the founding of the U.S. government. The treaty emphasized the Founding Fathers’ desire for religious sovereignty – religion would not govern or menace the diplomatic relations between the U.S. and the rest of the world.

As the Government of the United States of America is not, in any sense, founded on the Christian religion; as it has in itself no character of enmity against the laws, religion, or tranquility of Musselmen; and as the said States never have entered into any war or act of hostility against any Mohomitan nation, it is declared by the parties that no pretext arising from religious opinions shall ever produce an interruption of the harmony existing between the two countries.”

-George Washington
"If we look back into history for the character of the present sects in Christianity, we shall find few that have not in their turns been persecutors, and complainers of persecution. The primitive Christians thought persecution extremely wrong in the Pagans, but practiced it on one another. The first Protestants of the Church of England blamed persecution in the Romish Church, but practiced it upon the Puritans. They found it wrong in Bishops, but fell into the practice themselves both there (England) and in New England."

- Benjamin Franklin

"Is uniformity attainable? Millions of innocent men, women and children, since the introduction of Christianity, have been burnt, tortured, fined, imprisoned; yet we have not advanced an inch towards uniformity. What has been the effect of coercion? To make one half of the world fools, and the other half hypocrites. To support roguery and error all over the earth."

- Thomas Jefferson

"But in Desem our reason and our faith became happily united. The wonderful structure of the universe, and everything we behold in the system of the creation, prove to us, far better than books can do, the existence of a God, and at the same time proclaim His attributes."

- Thomas Paine

"As I understand the Christian religion, it was, and is, a revelation. But how has it happened that millions of falses, falsehoods, legends, have been blended with both Jewish and Christian revelation that have made them the most bloody religion that ever existed?"

- John Adams

"Experience witnesseth that ecclesiastical establishments, instead of maintaining the purity and efficacy of religion, have had a contrary operation. During almost fifteen centuries has the legal establishment of Christianity been on trial. What has been its result? More or less, in all places, pride and insolence in the clergy, ignorance and servility in the laity; in both, superstition, bigotry and persecution."

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"Let it simply be asked, where is the security for property, for reputation, for life, if the sense of religious obligation desert the oaths which are the instruments of investigation in courts of justice? And let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion."

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FRAGMENTATION
The hyper-fragmentation of today’s religious denominations has created a competitive field of theologies in which Americans are constantly realigning their personal beliefs. Ideals of liberty and freedom which have been linked to the foundations of capitalism and democracy promote these choices; no longer do Americans feel the need to retain their loyalty with the denominations under which they were raised. Rather, the contemporary religious man has the freedom to navigate through the diverse and complex religious landscape until he has landed on whichever belief system is most adequate. This spiritual flux supports a modern religious paradigm that is fraught with conflicting interpretations10.

ENLIGHTENMENT
The contemporary rise of individual consciousness and independent decision-making is a product of generational changes, echoing the early Congregationalists of the 17th century. In the late 1950s America witnessed the phenomenon of the Baby Boom following World War II, spurring a new generation challenging matters of authority, hierarchy, and domination. Their questions and provocations gave rise to a sense of “cultural egalitarianism”11—in essence, a modern-day Age of Enlightenment. Their movement thus incited an overall feeling of individuality and exploration; consequentially, the traditional values and rituals that had once been molded by specific religious organizations slowly began to lose their place in contemporary American society.

AUTHORITY
The strict institutions that enforce liturgical modes of worship encourage a closed spiritual process that fuels discomfort and weakens the sense of belonging. Incidentally, such places of worship have become unattainable symbols of divinity and constructs of authority. For the religious, the very notion of authority suffocates the institutions of freedom and codifies spirituality. For the irreligious, the dogmatic nature of prevailing religious authorities is seen as a mechanism of polarization and privatization, strengthening the boundaries that separate the sacred from the profane.

MOVEMENT
The secular movement represents the struggle of the profane man—one who is constantly searching for a new desacralized, existential existence12. Since the introduction of the Humanist Manifesto in 1933, secular humanism initiatives strove to represent their developing point of view towards new conditions of the modern world. In their eyes, the old doctrines and practices of the world religions exhibited doggedness in preserving traditional beliefs that were incapable of supporting the dynamic and shifting values of their contemporary society.

EMBATTLEMENT
Nonbelievers have found themselves in a perceptual battle with their dominant, religious counterpart; this defensive competition has forced the secular movement into re-evaluating their place in the greater American society by means of assuming a sub-alternative identity among the irreligious13. Their position as the minority has been exacerbated by rising tides of fundamental religiosity14 which have seemingly overshadowed all efforts made by the progressive secular movement in hope of achieving a secular revolution. Despite their growth in numbers the movement has learned to accept the limits of its secular influence and has taken up “minority discourse and identity politics”15 in its pursuit of an equally credible position in society.
ORGANIZATION

Although the religious and the irreligious are players on the same ideologically competitive field, they each strive for separate ends through separate means. While the religious have been following a promotional agenda through recruitment and organization, the irreligious remain skeptical of institutions and political associations. Only as an internalized set of individuals with unique self-identifications can the secular populations exist in the theological world. By this logic, freethinkers do not need a community or an organized symposium for spreading secular beliefs in order to compete with religious mobilization. Instead, they need a sanctuary in which their oppositional beliefs may be encouraged and sustained.

TENSION

Tension has become the agent through which the secular movement has strengthened its particular value and belief systems and reinforced its identity amongst the theological world. By maintaining the aforementioned boundaries separating the secular from the theological, freethinkers have embraced the external pressures of the “persistently religious society” and assumed the position of a subcultural identity – a niche in America’s religious landscape.

NICHE

The niche is to serve as an internalized, public realm in which individual, secular beliefs are both molded and accepted. It is critical to the interests of the secular society that the niche is not a bubble; a bubble offers only a microtheologically sterile environment in which its occupant is shielded from oppositional views. Even more so, the niche must not become an island; an island is a place of avoidance and isolation. The strength of the niche, then, must derive from its voluntary presence and accessibility amongst the greater society. It must become a sanctuary for the individual.
IDENTIFYING THE PROFANE
The issue of identity is a complex and sensitive one when it comes to demarcating an infinitely heterogeneous set of nonreligious beliefs. To split the national demographic down the middle, stamping one side as religious and the other as irreligious is but the first step in a seemingly impractical and arduous effort that will fail to yield concrete answers; not even the most succinct, comprehensive survey can measure the subtleties of religious (and irreligious) variations. Thus, any attempt at ameliorating the current situation of the profane in the public life of modern-day America – one of backlash and exclusion - through mass organization may be seen as futile (Young, Attack on Secularism).

The principle concern with the disparities between the religious and the irreligious is based on the fact that despite the rise in irreligiousness and secular values, nonbelievers continue to be vilified as immoral and unpatriotic. These attitudes, over time, have added to the religious community’s phobia of atheists and agnostics and have fueled religious intolerance. This intolerance toward the irreligious “remains one of the few forms of socially accepted bigotry” in today’s society.

"No, I don’t know that atheists should be considered as citizens, nor should they be considered patriots. This is one nation under God.”

- George H.W. Bush
IMPORTANCE OF RELIGION: INTERNATIONAL

TOP TEN MOST RELIGIOUS COUNTRIES
Is religion an important part of your daily life?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COUNTRY</th>
<th>%YES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EGYPT</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>BANGLADESH</td>
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<tr>
<td>SRI LANKA</td>
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<tr>
<td>INDONESIA</td>
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<tr>
<td>CONGO</td>
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<tr>
<td>SIERRA LEONE</td>
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<tr>
<td>MALAWI</td>
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<td>SENEGAL</td>
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<tr>
<td>MOROCCO</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNITED ARAB EMIRATES</td>
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TOP TEN LEAST RELIGIOUS COUNTRIES
Is religion an important part of your daily life?

<table>
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<td>SOUTH KOREA</td>
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<td>JAPAN</td>
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<tr>
<td>FRANCE</td>
<td>25</td>
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<tr>
<td>MONGOLIA</td>
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</table>

(Source Data: Gallup <http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/54/Religion_in_the_world.PNG>)
Is religion an important part of your daily life?

**TOP TEN LEAST RELIGIOUS STATES**

<table>
<thead>
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<td>NEW HAMPSHIRE</td>
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<td>MASSACHUSETTS</td>
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<td>RHODE ISLAND</td>
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<td>NEVADA</td>
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**TOP TEN MOST RELIGIOUS STATES**

<table>
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<td>KENTUCKY</td>
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<tr>
<td>TEXAS</td>
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</table>
The Rise of Irreligion in the U.S.

MAKEUP OF THE UNAFFILIATED

| Affiliated with a religion | Secular unaffiliated | Religious unaffiliated | Agnostic | Atheist | Don’t know/refused |

Belief in God or Universal Spirit Among Unaffiliated

- Believe in God; absolutely certain
- Believe in God; barely certain
- Believe in God; not at all certain
- Don’t know/refused

Frequency of Prayer Among Unaffiliated

- Daily
- Weekly
- Monthly
- Seldom
- Never
- Don’t know/refused

Importance of Religion in One’s Life Among Unaffiliated

- Very important
- Somewhat important
- Not too/not at all important
- Don’t know/refused

Frequency of Receiving Answers to Prayers Among Unaffiliated

- At least once a week
- Once or twice a month
- Several times a year
- Seldom/never
- Don’t know/refused

Frequency of Attendance at Religious Services Among Unaffiliated

- More than once a week
- Once a week
- Once or twice a month
- A few times a year
- Seldom
- Never

Literal Interpretation of Scripture Among Unaffiliated

- Word of God; literally true word for word
- Word of God; but not literally true word for word
- Book written by men, not the word of God
- Don’t know/refused

(Source Data: U.S. Religious Landscape Survey <http://religions.pewforum.org/portraits>)}
"The God of the Old Testament is arguably the most unpleasant character in all fiction: jealous and proud of it; a petty, unjust, unforgiving control-freak; a vindictive, bloodthirsty ethnic cleanser; a misogynistic, homophobic, racist, infanticidal, genocidal, familial, pestilential, megalomaniacal, sadomasochistic, capriciously malevolent bully."—Richard Dawkins, atheist and evolutionary biologist

"Lord, you are the source of every good thing. You are our only hope, and we stand before you today in awe of your power and in gratitude for your blessings, and humility for our sins. Father, our heart breaks for America. We see discord at home. We see fear in the marketplace. We see anger in the halls of government, and as a nation we have forgotten who made us, who protects us, who blesses us, and for that we cry out for your forgiveness."—Rick Perry, Republican candidate for the 2012 Presidential Election
“Each man or woman could enjoy –nay, could only have–his or her own perspective, mental set, sensibility, and, by extension, response to everything around them including gardens, parks, and the wilderness.”

John Locke
DUAL GARDENS
The analysis of the early Renaissance gardens and the English landscape gardens is intended to present two conflicting understandings of the relationship between man and nature, while learning from and reinterpreting the old devices of the garden typology.

The rationale of the Renaissance garden – particularly, those of the sixteenth to seventeenth century Italian Renaissance villas – may be conceived as an allegorical composition – a sequence narrated by the scriptures and ancient mythologies which, at one point, were tied to the enterprise of humanist thought. If the Renaissance garden was the diagram of cosmic order directing the inquiring mind to God, then the English landscape garden was its antithesis - a divergent push towards liberation and enlightenment; a picturesque painting come to life.

The ideal landscape garden was a setting for discourse, introspection, drama and spectacle stripped of allusion and metaphorical meaning. Variety, naturalness, and irregularity replaced the formality, exactness, and contrivance of the picturesquely’s mannerist and baroque predecessors. The evolution of the garden, then, may be seen as a physical environment – a place - constantly transforming under the forces of its social, political, and spiritual context. This evolution, more significantly, is contingent on the ever-changing needs of societies in search of meaning and truth – sacred or profane.

How can the garden in the 21st century address the needs of the secular constituency?

How can the garden become a place of universality in a contemporary society where exclusion is unavoidable and non-adversarial democracy is a thing of the past?

THE GARDENS AT STOWE vs. VILLA VALMARANA
The Renaissance villa was the manifestation of humanist thought, a microcosm of a perpetual, perfect world in which a higher understanding of the scriptures and ancient mythologies could be reached. Nearly every treatment of the natural landscape was imbued with the personification of a god or goddess (Hussey 22): sculptures, fountains, inscriptions, and ornamental details were meticulously employed to convey divine messages while tombs, altars, and monuments were expressive of high levels of morality (Dixon 108). The villa was dedicated to the resuscitation of the classical world and intended to create a spiritual connection between man, nature, and the Godly realm.

Humanist agendas were in opposition to the medieval scholarly interests of the 18th century which emphasized rational, practical, and scientific studies. As such, the humanists sought to revive the philosophic and sacred qualities of space in their villas and gardens. The humanist ideology thus drove the iconographical programs laid out in their villas and gardens which had resonated notions of paradise and mythology.

Villa gardens were situated within the whole project of the Renaissance culture (37). They were the cultivation of inner values and beliefs—the Creator’s vision—through nature’s resources. A place where the spectator discovers and demonstrates his or her understanding of the scriptures; where the mind and the body are reconciled through the careful cultivation of nature’s resources.
The formal articulation behind the Renaissance villa represented a divergence from the classic courtyard typology (an inward-oriented architecture) to a new, liberated paradigm – an outward-oriented architecture that sanctioned what English writer Henry Wotton termed the “royalty of sight.” (38) Through these means the villa would become associated with the sacred landscapes that extended beyond the boundaries of their properties; a re-evaluation of the human predisposition for the privileged, panoramic view in all directions. This new perspective was aligned with the claims that the contemporary humanists were making about their own enterprise (Comito 38) and urged for what Erasmus Darwin referred to as “cosmic piety.”

“What is involved is a re-evaluation, fundamental to humanist thought, of the human, or all-too-human, propensity for lifting one’s eyes and looking around, for yielding to just that concupiscentia occulorum condemned by medieval critics. The kind of “cosmic piety” that impelled Seneca to exclaim that nature “has set us in her centre and given us a panoramic view in all directions” is revived and given tangible expression in the new villa gardens of the Renaissance.” (Comito 37)

COSMOGENY

Villas became a devise of cosmic harmony; a liminal space of geometric perfection and Godly references (41). If the eye could grasp the constructed beauty of the landscape, then mankind – through the careful observation and controlling of the senses – could discover its place in nature and position itself in a new cosmic reconstruction. The transformation of the villa into a sacred place represented an act of cosmogony – the reproduction of the cosmos – that reflected the innermost desire of the religious:

“Whatever the dimension of space with which he is familiar and in which he regards himself as situated – his country, his city, his village, his house – religious man feels the need always to exist in a total and organized world, in a cosmos.” (Eliade 44)

Mircea Eliade

This Godly transformation was especially articulated through three garden features: the bosco, water, and perspective:
Villa Farnese
Antonio da Sangallo
Caprarola, 1536

A Pentagonal fortress | palazzo organized around a central axis

The Palazzo – serving as a permanent residence and containing a series of guest apartments – acts as an architectural hinge, connecting the village below with a series of constructed gardens and landscapes leading up to the Cimini hills.

The axial system is predicated on movement. Alignment of the major architectural and natural elements – the horizon, the city, the forecourt, and the palace, the central void of the courtyard, the rear gardens and surrounding landscape – sets the stage for the promenade. The spatial hierarchy as one ascends the terrain towards the palazzo’s three frontal facades becomes a theatrical play of separate stages and views.23
Villa Lante
Jacopo Barozzi da Vignola, Giacomo del Duca
Bagnaia, 1560

A synthesis of architecture, city, landscape and nature

The Villa Lante juxtaposes the parterre (the formal, axial garden) with the barchetto (the larger, labyrinthine landscape) within the boundaries of a large retaining wall. Whereas one garden directs movement through its axial, terraced composition, the other allows for natural meandering from one garden feature to the next.

The incorporation of water as a means of directing the observer’s flow is critical in guiding and directing views. One follows the water features’ axial arrangement as it cascades from the cave of the upper terrace down towards the reflecting pool centered within the lower terrace. It is only on the upper terraces, however, that one experiences the panorama of the town with the formal gardens in the foreground.24
Cortile del Belvedere
Donate Bramante
Rome, 1505

An imperial renovation linking the Vatican with Innocent VIII’s Villa Belvedere

The Cortile del Belvedere acts as the mediating ground between palace and villa, formalized as an elongated, enclosed courtyard. The horizontal layering of the courtyard divides the interior space into three terraces. The lowest terrace acts as an open-air theater; the middle serves as both seating and stairs; and the highest provides a garden composed of parterres and trees.

The axial nature of the plan – an immense 100 by 300 m – is activated through a continuously changing perspective as one moves through each terrace. Through changes in incline, column height, and treatment of the walls of the cortile the observer experiences the phenomenon of “optical lengthening” – the viewer’s perception of depth and space is constantly altered.25
Boboli Gardens
Bartolomeo Ammannati, Bernardo Buontalenti, Giulio and Alfonso Parigi, Zanobi del Rosso
Florence, 1558-1775

A hillside garden fusing the urban palazzo with the natural landscape

A series of garden features and pathways form an extension of the Palazzo Pitti – a massive palace appearing as a monolith behind the Via Romana. In crossing through the threshold of Brunelleschi’s façade of the palace the observer is aligned with a sequence of events leading up the hill. The climax is a spectacle at the very top of the hill – a view back to the city “situating the urban palazzo as a villa in the landscape.” This experience contrasts with that of the opposing view from the street, rendering the palazzo as part of the urban arena.”
Villa d’Este
Alberto Galvani
Tivoli, 1572

Through Cardinal Ippolito d’Este’s attempt at rivaling the ancient villas of Hadrian, Quintilius and Varro emerged a terraced complex bordering on a massive retaining wall facing the city. The terraced gardens – a composition of labyrinths, pergolas, porticoes and fountains – create a patchwork of spaces that aligns (and detours) the viewer with the main axis leading towards the house.

The horizontal bands of gardens leading up towards the villa establish a system of transverse axes that visually link the formalized garden with the outer landscape, favoring the view towards Rome over that of Tivoli. A series of architectural framing devices on the outer borders of the garden emphasize these views.27
Villa Medici
Michelozzo Michelozzi
Fiesole, 1462

An architectural system merging nature, space, and geometry

The Villa Medici was one of the first villas to integrate the formal construction of the panorama. Its position on the sloped landscape of Fiesole offers a series of uninterrupted views over the Arno River valley and the urban center of Florence which aid in the narrative of the sequence through the villa’s three principle levels: the salon, the ‘secret garden’, and the panoramic view itself.

Geometry and repetition allow for the villa to be dissected as a “dimensional scheme in which the connection between the plan of the house, the garden and the landscape could be controlled mathematically”28. The formal strategy of the villa is the agent through which the southern panorama is architecturally articulated – this is made evident as one looks beyond the lower terrace from the pergola.29
Villa Giulia
Giorgio Vasari, Barozzi da Vignola, Bartolomeo Ammanati
Rome, 1555

A telescopic layering of building and landscape

The Villa Giulia is a synthesis of landscape and architecture sunken within the broad valley of the Tiber River. Its organization resembles that of the Cortile del Belvedere and the Villa Madama – a sequence of courtyards defined by a series of thresholds that taper towards the outer landscape. Each interior space – voids within the larger complex – can be described as individual rooms that are spatially compressed by their surrounding envelopes, acting as interior facades.

The configuration of the villa is marked by a central axis that skewers each of the three layers of the villa’s composition. Each successive interior garden is linked visually through the central axis through which movement is directed and in tension with its subsidiary routes. The Villa’s overall effect is driven by procession; the relationship with the surrounding landscape “is created by means of a sequence which broadens spatially and becomes increasingly transparent.”
Villa Gamberaia
Settignano, Early 17th Century

A composition of figural elements

A composition of autonomous parts linked together by a long pathway—the bowling green—which connects the villa on one side to the grotto garden embedded within the hill and the other to an infinite panorama of Florence. The house is but a single piece in the series of figures that act as framing devices along the extended central space. The landscape figures—trees, hedges, pools—are treated as geometric, space defining elements that organizes views of the surrounding city and landscape.31
"The pleasure garden as setting for social interaction, as background for playing both in the sense of diversion and of acting a part... That is to say the 17th Century garden was essentially an artificial environment designed to give form and place and visibility to the actions of a particular group of people. The group, to be sure, was composed of members of a court or an aristocratic household, but what evolved was a new relationship between theater and actors, and eventually between the city and its inhabitants... In the garden the concept of landscape acquired a new and complex meaning."

John Jackson

The classical English landscape garden was a carefully organized realm that epitomized the country’s state of mind in the 17th and 18th century; a philosophical and intellectual movement away from the aesthetic and order of the classical Baroque garden and toward a poetic and liberating experience. Transcending the “nymphs and satyrs of the preceding generation into ‘The Genius of the Place’” (Hussey 31), Alexander Pope, James Thomson, John Dyer and other 18th century English poets set the stage for the prevailing attitudes to this new, picturesque vision. The garden became a “technical and scientific laboratory, a canvas on which to paint an abstract picture, and a place for aesthetic experimentation” (Mosser 14), where each experimentation represented the grand undertaking of landowners to transform the English countryside into a picturesque landscape – one that was abstract and allegorical in nature.
17th CENTURY INFLUENCES

The picturesque was to be understood as a reformation and adjustment of the former Renaissance strategies in order to serve new ideas, attitudes, and adventures of the human spirit (Dixon 105). Geometrical contrivances of the French gardens - parterres, canals, bosquets, statues, domes, triumphal arches and treillage - were rejected, while other 17th century European garden features stood as legacies to the English garden design.
DOMINANT SYSTEMS

AESTHETIC LIBERTY
Symbolizations of liberty and other social and political agendas motivated many picturesque proposals: Democracy over autocracy, the endorsement of freedom and tolerance over authority in the arts and in politics, and the departure from the scripted and formalized designs that reflected the absolutism of its French predecessors inspired a new approach and conceptualization of the English garden (Dixon 7). The association between aesthetic liberty and political liberty can be expressed through the analysis of the Whig alliance of the 1790s, a movement in favor of freer compositions of distinctive elements, contrast, mixture and connections (Robertson 48). The garden, then, was analogous to the mixed constitution advocated by the Whigs during the Glorious Revolution of 1688 which had outlined an authoritative balance between the king, the aristocracy, and the people. Monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy were the components of a more functioning, egalitarian composition (Robertson 49).

LANDSCAPE DESPOTISM
A fear of “despotic monotony” (Robertson 34) laid the foundation for ideological conflict: the ideal garden condition existed as an intermediary position between the ancient regime of the divisive, formal garden and the modern, natural revolution. This delicate equilibrium was one of aesthetic and political implications - sufficient natural freedom was imperative.

VILLA D’ESTE STOWE
- Geometric formality
- Perpetual symmetry
- Controlled perspective

ANCIENT REGIME OF GEOMETRY → EVOLUTION TOWARD “NATURALNESS”
- Clumps
- Belts
- Serpentine waters

ANCIENT REGIME OF GEOMETRY EVOLUTION TOWARD “NATURALNESS”

*Connections
*Mixture
*Contrasts
*Limitations
THE NATURAL
The initial objective of the landscape designers was to direct and control the perceptions and experiences of the people who passed through their gardens. In the beginning of the 18th century the English garden became a device through which experience and meditation were controlled and directed. The role of associationism – the registering of images and inscribed words, releasing associated ideas – raised questions over the issue of the role of the directive and the lack of solitary meditation (38). The call for private spaces for introspection and uninhibited patterns of meditation soon followed in the latter half of the 18th century. Vagueness, free thought, flexibility, privacy, and exploration were the cornerstones for a more natural and liberated landscape that expressed the relationship between man and nature.

INTROSPECTION
Garden theorists and predecessors called for the preservation of the natural and the informal in both their philosophies and designs. The designs of Alexander Pope (perhaps most notably, that of the Garden at Twickenham of 1745) and Stephen Switzer promote solitary, introspective experiences through the use of “private and natural” serpentine pathways that lead one through constantly changing contexts. It was this perception of the ever-changing conditions of the field that gave testimony to the landscape garden’s use of scenic variety over associative, representational devices. Ultimately, the English garden was conceived as an expressive rather than emblematic device with “the force of a metaphor, free from the detail of an allegory” (94).

“Landscape architecture needs to recover a desire and a capability of addressing experience. It need not be a question of iconography, though that is an obvious way forward. More subtly, we need to recover a sense of gardens as expressions or representations of a culture’s position vis-à-vis nature.”

John Dixon
Often the goal of the English garden was to fabricate a landscape that was representational of an English scene both in the sense of scenery and “as a theater of cultural history.” (Dixon 44) Gardens took on a theatrical dimension through their architectural components, subsequently altering the role of the spectator: the garden visitor no longer acted as a passive spectator but, instead, became an active participant in the drama of the garden spaces. The garden acted as a stage in which the shifting perspectives of the social milieu were put on display and episodes of human action were represented.

There existed, of course, the employment of elements such as momentary devices of behavioral instigation scattered throughout the landscape garden. The attempt at capturing the qualities of significant human action – an objective which was achieved through historical landscape paintings – was vitally dependent upon the architectural elements of the garden. While the human spectator was the true subject of the garden, his actions were essentially stimulated by devices such as the temples, statues, and inscriptions. Conversely, the actions of the human in the representational technique of the painting provide the drama of the garden through his understanding of such devices; human action assumes a permanent place in the artist’s rendering.
The Garden of Lord Burlington's villa at Chiswick
William Kent
Twickenham, London, 1736

The garden serves as one of the earliest models of the English landscape garden and was originally inspired by the gardens of ancient Rome (which, in turn, followed the formal nature of the ancient Greek gardens) much like the Neo-Palladian Villa around which it is situated. Kent and the gardens’ subsequent designers experimented with a wide range of designs and architectural elements that were influenced by contemporary poetry and theater design. Features of the garden included groves, faux Egyptian objects, serpentine pathways, fountains, bowling greens and mock fortifications. A series of fabriques (garden buildings) reflected Kent’s knowledge of ancient Rome, Greek, Egyptian and Renaissance culture while the scattered statues and architectural elements reflected his loyalty to the Whig ideology.
The Park of the villa of Claremont
Charles Bridgeman, Capability Brown, William Kent and Sir John Vanbrugh
Surrey, England, 1715

The Park at Surrey is a sequence of events, loosely defined by the installment of multiple architectural elements that create a larger composition within the garden. From the original approach of the Belvedere, the garden visitor is presented with a view over a series of bastions to the bowling green and a lime avenue below. Upon descending a dense terrain of woods and serpentine pathways, the viewer is confronted with the peculiar turfed amphitheatre – the garden’s most prominent feature which extends over 3 acres, providing vistas of the round lake and wooded expanse beyond.
The designs of Bridgeman and Brown at Stowe transformed the early-baroque parterre gardens (exemplary of Italy and France) into a new and inventive landscape garden. The events and proceedings that took place on the grounds of Stowe (ranging from the planning of wars and rebellions and significant discussions amongst political leaders) concretized the garden as momentous place in England’s political history. Its organization was unregimented and natural in its orientation of views and sequence, while many of the temples and monuments dispersed throughout the landscape pay homage to the political beliefs of the Whig party and the ideas behind the Age of Enlightenment. The design was celebrated by many poets and philosophers of the time, including Alexander Pope whose poem makes a tribute to Richard Boyle, 3rd Earl of Burlington in 1731:

“Consult the Genius of the Place in all,
That tells the Waters or to rise, or fall,
Or helps th’ ambitious Hill the heav’n to scale,
Or scoops in circling theatres the Vale,
Calls in the Country, catches opening glades,
Joins willing woods, and varies shades from shades,
Now breaks or now directs th’ intending Lines;
Paints as you plant, and, as you work, designs.”

The Gardens at Stowe
Charles Bridgeman, Capability Brown
Buckinghamshire, England 1711-1741

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Paints as you plant, and, as you work, designs.”
A project where the once overtly-mythical symbols of the garden have been transformed by a modern age of reasoning and existential thought. The universal truths of life and death, mortality, finitude are no longer suppressed – Instead, the garden is a place that symbolizes the intrinsic values of human existence and recognizes what is most common to all mankind – NATURE, TIME, AND MORTALITY

The utopian concept of the garden must be reexamined in order to respond to the framework of a new divided and complex contemporary society; if the metaphorical Garden of Eden represented a Utopia then the new garden will exist as a grounded, dystopic reconstruction –

BOSTON : CITY UPON THE HILL
An early settlement founded by Puritan emigrants in search of a sovereign state – one in which they could exercise their own ideological beliefs, free from religious persecution and the oppressive power of the English Monarchy. Boston would be their “new Jerusalem,” the destination point of their spiritual journey which had been laid out by their Bible. The city would become the breeding ground for the growth of religion and the Protestant ethic, precipitating a chronology of subsequent stages of religious development in Boston.
Puritan Settlement [1700 - 1780]
The arrival of the Puritan church in 1630 established an early dominance over the religious terrain of Boston, beginning with the planting of the First, Second, and Old South Churches. Boston had transformed into a divine beacon – a ‘City upon a hill.’

Unitarian Movement [1781 - 1830]
Growing numbers of Unitarian followers took hold of the “First” Puritan churches in the Boston area, converting them into Unitarian spaces for worship and triggering a wave of church splits that would further fragment the religious community.

European Migration [1831 - 1930]
With the introduction of European immigrants came the development of new Baptist, Episcopal, Methodist and Congregational churches. Industrialization, migration, and urban revivalism were all factors in restructuring the religious identity of Boston into an increasingly growing Protestant city.

The White Flight [1931 - 1969]
Stricter immigration laws passed during the late 1920s forcibly cut off the growth in new language churches which had previously proliferated through the introduction of European immigrants. Churches lost their distinctive presence and began a steady decline; the prospect of merging these declining churches proved ineffective.

The Quiet Revival [1970 - 2000]
A new wave of immigrants from Latin America, Asia, Africa, Brazil and the Caribbean stimulated a healthy growth in the Christian faith after 1965, especially through the spread of Pentecostalism and Baptist groups lacking strong denominational ties. In the latter half of the 20th century emerged a new global diversity of Boston’s religious community.
THE CENTRAL ARTERY/TUNNEL PROJECT; "THE BIG DIG"

The largest infrastructural undertaking in the modern world has concluded (for the time being) an everlasting saga of urban metamorphosis: At its very beginning in 1643, the completion of Boston’s first landfilling venture; in 1742, the extension of the city’s waterfront via the construction of 166 wharfs and docks; in 1897, the launching of the first subway system in America; in 1904, the initiation of Boston’s blue line – the country’s first underwater train transportation system; and, in 1961, the erection of the elevated highway – a steel wall that ultimately divided downtown in two and left the city in a state of congestion and destruction (McNichol 20).

The project’s scale is massive: a 30-year, $14.6 billion endeavor occupying over 5,000 full-time employees for the construction of over 42 miles of highway. Its impact is one of total transformation: what was once a notorious barrier that had destroyed 1000 residential and commercial structures and displaced over 20,000 residences and businesses is now a subterranean superhighway providing eight to ten lanes of high speed transit blasting through the historical fill of the protected port city.
The removal of the 40-foot tall “Green Monster” – the elevated roadway of Interstate 93 – has liberated a 5 mile artery cutting through the heart of the city, allowing for the activation of 44 acres of industrial disfigurement into a sequence of open spaces and urban parks known as the Rose Kennedy Greenway (McNichol 14). Gardens, tree-lined promenades and plazas compose an opportunistic, natural procession through the dynamic, urban environment.

1867
Figure-ground map indicating the urban fabric of downtown Boston along the shoreline. A series of protruding wharfs and docks extend out into the inner harbor to accommodate deeper-hulled steamships of the 1800s, creating a saw-tooth edge along the historic waterfront.

1929
The protected port city densifies and spreads westward, taking on the characteristics of the medieval city. A series of figural spaces take form around the complex network of streets radiating outward from Faneuil Hall and Scollay Square - a product of urban renewal and land reclamation.

2011
Downtown Boston’s reconfiguration as a result of the Central Artery - an infrastructural wall of elevated highway that once split the urban fabric in two, separating the downtown district from the inner harbor.
SITE PROPOSAL
Christopher Columbus Park is the city’s first waterfront park, originally opened in 1976 as a model for future waterfront projects throughout Boston. Today the park is seen as an oasis of the North End providing space for relaxation and leisure. Within the park are a series of garden elements used as an attempt at giving order to the vastness of the site—among them are broad lawns, a fountain, performance area, play lot, statue, trellis, and memorial. Situated in between North Commercial Wharf and Long Wharf to the south, the park serves as a critical link between the city and the harbor—the site’s development and its reconceptualization will not only serve the needs and desires of the Wharf district but will re-examine the typology of garden and redefine the water’s edge. What was once the original bay and landing used by the early Europeans and a hub of mercantile activity will become a vehicle connecting the city’s periphery with its historic center.
The site’s location offers two privileged views: one view looking east toward Boston’s inner harbor...
And the other facing Downtown, with Market Center and the Marriott's Custom House in the foreground.
URBAN SCALE CONTEXTUAL RESPONSE

SITE AS CENTRAL NODE | CONNECTION TO WATERFRONT + GOVERNMENT CENTER
INFRASTRUCTURE | CENTRAL ARTERY
SITE AS JOINT | MAJOR VEHICULAR FLOWS
CONNECTIONS BETWEEN DOWNTOWN AND HARBOR
LOCAL TYPOLOGY

BOSTON COMMON

BOSTON CITY HALL

QUINCY MARKET

CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS WATERFRONT PARK
"Gardens, whether they are intended for ruling princes or the general public, for philosophers, scholars or poets, or as the adornment of a suburban villa, whatever the economic and social status of their owner, whatever their situation – the city or the country, an aristocratic residence or a working farm – their purpose is always the same: to provide ‘a place of sanctuary in an ancient Arcady or in the Paradise inhabited by early man, a Hermitage, a haven of solitude, a setting for theatre and display’ [J. Baltrusaitis]."

Monique Mosser
The generation of the program is reflective of the values and agendas of the secular individual. Ultimately, the composition of the project acts as system that encourages a plurality of experiences and sanctions the notion that “space is a product of the society that identifies, defines, and segregates it” (Stackelberg 52).

If the sacred seek truth through liturgical modes of worship, then the irreligious find sanctity through three contemporary, oppositional modes: information, observation, and spectacle. In effect, a tripartite program emerges: the library – a repository for both published and digital collections; the observatory – a sanctuary for free thought and a connection to the cosmos; and, the theater – a 21st century arena of drama and modern spectacle. The nature of each programmatic piece is achieved functionally, through practical adjacencies and, qualitatively, through a system of dualities. The nesting of each fragmented piece within the garden seeks to establish a new typological condition – an architecture of compromise between freedom and control, natural and constructed, public and private, the individual and the collective.
PROGRAMMATIC CONCEPTUALIZATION

A fragmented collection of archetypal components which, collectively, constitute the garden – A universal field programmed for the needs of the profane. Through the act of fragmentation, programmatic pieces that might otherwise be consolidated into a single, built form are dispersed among the site, eliminating the idea of authority and allowing for individual experiences void of architectural contrivance. In this sense, the urban garden becomes an unscripted coexistence of events.

VIEW OF THE WATER CELEBRATION ON BOSTON COMMON, OCTOBER 25th, 1848.
In order to address the needs of the profane, the old symbols and devices of the Humanist and English gardens are in need of revision; the transformation of the garden typology and the avoidance of overtly cultural symbolism will create universal conditions, stripped of the contamination and pressures of authority and ultimate consensus. A careful mediation between liberation and conflict must be achieved.
SPECULATION
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<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRIDAY</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUNDAY</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MONDAY</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TUESDAY</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
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**FOSSIL HARBOR FOR JANUARY 2012**

**FULL MOON**

**NEW MOON**