

Site LINES

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Letter from the Editor

From a philosophical and aesthetic perspective, Western culture can be surveyed as a series of movements coursing like a broad river through history. As is true of the other arts, designed landscapes reflect period and place. Their stylistic paradigms, however, are inevitably carried on currents of contact to other times and other places. The momentum of the river's flow may vary and sometimes, like turbulent waters of rapids rushing over rocks, cultural transformation at a particular historical cusp may forge new channels defined by fate and fashion.

The theme of this issue of *Site/Lines* examines landscapes in the context of one such cusp, that between the classical seventeenth-century landscapes of geometry and authority and the eighteenth-century gardens of revolution and Romanticism. Lines blur, of course, and tradition and innovation often coexist.

As Hugh Johnson writes in his chicken-versus-egg

speculation "Precursor to the French Picturesque? Pondering the Meaning of Painshill," the eighteenth-century English garden is widely considered the fountainhead of the transition from designed landscapes symbolically associated with monarchical absolutism to open landscapes intended as emblems of parliamentary governance and civil liberty. Meticulously restored in recent years, Painshill Park appears today much as it did when created by its owner Charles Hamilton between 1738 and 1773. Its Capability Brown-style landscape, which Hamilton ornamented with garden follies similar to those that were becoming de rigueur in *ancien régime* France and the rest of Europe, provides an opportunity for the reader to ponder the matter of English-French reciprocal influence.

Also taking up the theme of international influence, Laurie Olin points out in "The Long Shadow of André Le Nôtre: Notes on the Design of Cities, Parks, and Gardens in America" the way in which Major Pierre-Charles L'Enfant's 1891 plan for laying out the

democratic capital of the newly formed United States, Washington, DC, is derived from the monumental reciprocal view lines and convergence of axial allées in *rond points* associated with Le Nôtre's plans. His essay further illustrates how the minimalist geometries in many landscape architectural projects from the 1950s to the present owe no small debt to the linear regularity and Cartesian spatial concepts Le Nôtre demonstrated at Versailles and Vaux-le-Vicomte.

The latter garden is considered by some landscape historians as Le Nôtre's masterpiece. Although designated a French national landmark, Vaux-le-Vicomte remains in private ownership. Today it enjoys the active stewardship of family member Alexandre de Vogüé, the subject of this issue's Place Keeper profile by Jill Sinclair.

Elizabeth Hyde describes how the influence of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's philosophy of nature is expressed in the garden of Ermenonville, where Rousseau resided at

the invitation of the Marquis René-Louis de Girardin during the final years of his life. She further explores the effect of his 1761 epistolary novel, *Julie ou la nouvelle Héloïse*, on the development of a botanically rich, naturalistic garden style in France.

In "Josephine and the Birth of the Imperial Picturesque," Susan Taylor-Leduc discusses how Empress Josephine Bonaparte created a post-Revolutionary variant on the French Picturesque landscape style by emulating Queen Marie-Antoinette's Le Petit Trianon and Rambouillet with their *hameaux* and symbolically important dairies. Her essay proceeds to illustrate the ways in which Josephine employed such practices as botanical acclimatization and illustration, farming, and floriculture to demonstrate how a new and more "objective" scientific mission could glorify the emerging nation-state in post-Revolutionary France.

If the Marquis Girardin's Rousseau-influenced garden at Ermenonville can be characterized as an example of Romanticism as moral virtue, the Parc Monceau designed by Louis Carrogis,

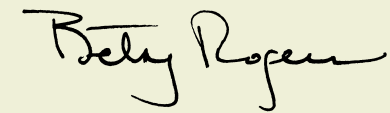
known as Carmontelle, is its opposite: Romanticism as exotic entertainment. Joseph Disponzio gives us a first-hand description of Monceau, which has been since the mid-nineteenth century a much-appreciated public park. In addition to observing the activities of its twenty-first-century visitors, he traces the park's origins as a pre-Revolutionary private estate bedecked with exotic *folies* intended to amuse the aristocratic guests of its libertine owner, Louis-Philippe-Joseph d'Orléans.

David Hays explains how mapping – the representation of landscape as if from above – played a formative role in reshaping garden design in France. In developing his theme in "Mapping and 'Natural' Garden Design in Late Eighteenth-Century France: The Example of Georges-Louis Le Rouge," he gives the reader an understanding of how the topographical representation of landscapes such as Parc Monceau allowed their

designers to conceive garden plots and estates as well as regional and national landscapes in a holistic manner.

Like the people living on the cusp dividing the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, we are in the midst of socially turbulent times. As we experience uncertainty about the future of Western culture, it is important to remind ourselves of the mission statement of the Foundation for Landscape Studies: "To promote an active understanding of the meaning of place in human life." Whether working for the protection of the planet Earth as the home of all species – including ourselves – or stewarding our home grounds with intelligence and love, please join me and other supporters of the Foundation for Landscape Studies in fulfilling this mission.

With good green wishes,



Elizabeth Barlow Rogers
President

On the Cover:

The gardens at Vaux-le-Vicomte, near Paris, first private commission for André Le Nôtre in the 1650s.

On the Cusp: Landscapes of Reason and Revolution

The Long Shadow of André Le Nôtre: Notes on the Design of Cities, Parks, and Gardens in America

Art, like nature, renews itself through recycling and recombining familiar elements and forms. Artists find material in the work of their forebears that has been previously overlooked or scorned and choose to reinterpret and reuse it. In some cases, the borrowing is overt – or, as Picasso put it, openly and boldly stolen. In others, it can be surreptitious or unconscious. Renewed attention to some minor aspect of an earlier artistic creation may inspire a flourish on something new or lead to fresh bodies of work, transforming an entire discipline. And some great artists accomplish so much that for a time they seem to use up all the possibilities, establishing a dominant style and overwhelming their successors for a generation or more.

André Le Nôtre was certainly such a figure, one of the greatest artists ever to work in the medium of landscape. His design ideas and motifs had a pervasive influence on England for a generation and on Spain, Italy, Prussia, Austria, and Russia for more than a century. So, too, aspects of his work continue to influence landscape design in the United States. His legacy can be seen in plans and designs from each period of our national history, from Federal-era Washington, DC, to the present moment.

Our inheritance from Le Nôtre has been most obvious in gardens and landscapes; less considered has been his influence upon architecture through the founding, teaching, and design principles of the *École des Beaux Arts* in Paris. The revolutionary principles Le Nôtre developed for site planning – with dominant and minor axes, variations along the route of march as one proceeds through the composition, and secondary elements and events occurring at distant points along radiating diagonals – became embedded in the approach to composition taught at the *École*, which subsequently trained generations of architects from many countries.

Influential planning projects in the American colonies in the late-seventeenth century – Williamsburg, Savannah, and Philadelphia – derived to a large extent from French and

Italian precedents, primarily in the employment of orthogonal grids to organize blocks, streets, and public squares. Then, after the American Revolution, when the federal government decided to build a capital, the resulting plan was influenced heavily by French baroque planning – despite the fact that its sponsors were descendants of English aristocracy. The former colonies were especially close to France as they attempted to produce a workable government discernibly different from that of England; both Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson spent considerable time in Paris during this period as ambassadors.

Jefferson was charged with the task of creating a city in terrain that embraced an estuary and considerable marshland at the confluence of the Potomac and Anacostia rivers. He engaged Pierre-Charles L'Enfant (1754–1825), an architect and engineer who had served under Washington in the Continental army and whose family had been involved in construction at Versailles. To assist in the survey and layout of the capital, Jefferson loaned L'Enfant an extensive collection of folios, maps, and plans of European cities and estates from his own private collection and offered a sketch indicating where he thought the governmental center should be.

A significant aspect of Le Nôtre's method was his use of hydraulic engineers and strategies at one chateau after another to drain flooded and swampy land and produce

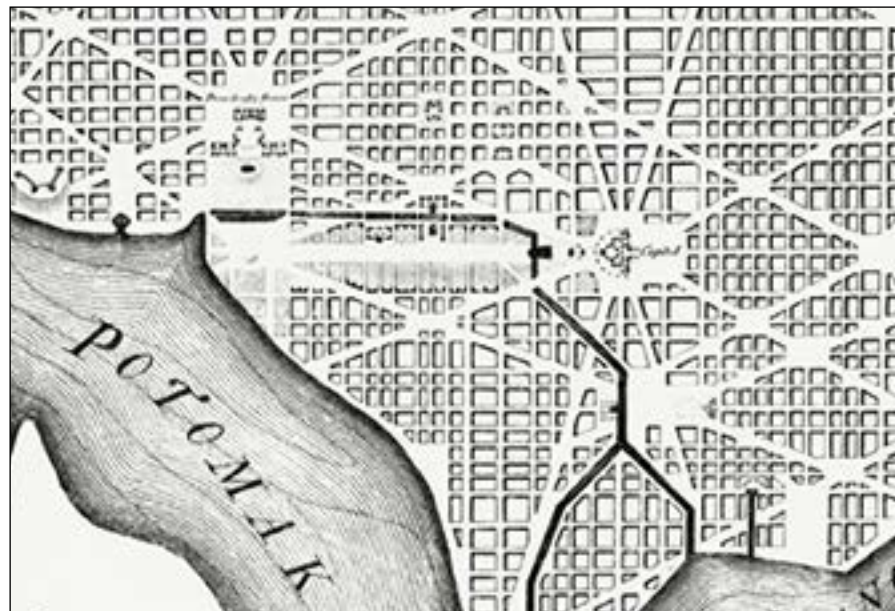
dramatic canals and basins. L'Enfant's plan for the capital, a baroque composition that exploited the existing topography, was also reminiscent of Le Nôtre's plan for Versailles. The Capitol building was to occupy a hilltop position analogous to that of the principal block of the chateau, and the president's residence (the White House) the position of the Grand Trianon. The axial expanse extending west below the Capitol was envisioned as a vast *tapis vert* lined with pavilions or lodges for foreign legations and administrative departments. The tidal marsh was drained into a canal parallel to the Mall (where Constitution Avenue is today) for water transport.

As immigrants flowed west throughout the nineteenth century, the planning and layout of a number of towns and cities reflected a further, although likely unconscious, influence of Le Nôtre in America. Detroit, Michigan; Indianapolis, Indiana; Madison, Wisconsin; and numerous other cities were organized according to baroque principles with multiple focal points linked by broad axes – plans often hidden later beneath subsequent developments. Such patterns can be found in the layout of many communities across the country, albeit often only in the initial diagram.

Frederick Law Olmsted, whose parks evoke both Romanticism and the Picturesque, is not someone we normally associate with André Le Nôtre, but in fact he was a good student of the master's oeuvre. Working on a forested mountaintop in

North Carolina from 1889 to 1895, Olmsted produced his last great work: an estate for George Washington Vanderbilt. The mansion, by Richard Morris Hunt, is an eclectic French Gothic assemblage, but the landscape harkens back to Le Nôtre's compositions at Chantilly, Sceaux, and Fontainebleau.

The terraces and allées Olmsted produced at Biltmore may seem unexpected, but it should be remembered that in many of his greatest "informal" parks, important areas are laid out with strict geometry and architectural order. Embedded in the heart of his first project, Central Park – commonly considered to be derived from English landscape parks and wild native scenery – one finds a remarkable set piece, the Mall. This unexpected promenade is lined with



Andrew Ellicott's 1792 revision of L'Enfant's plan of 1791-1792 for the "Federal City," later Washington City, District of Columbia.

General Motors Technical Center, Warren, Michigan, by Eero Saarinen and Thomas Church.

ranks of American elms and populated with statuary representing literary figures. It is further extended by a monumental stairway that leads the visitor down to the Bethesda Terrace and its fountain, terminating at the lake's edge. Here this grand axis melts into a view across the lake to the Ramble – a miniature wilderness on the opposite shore – thereby juxtaposing the geometry and order associated with Le Nôtre and an alternative concept of nature as order.

Often in Olmsted's work we find a destination or climax that uses a fundamental strategy derived from le Nôtre for a different programmatic purpose – even as it strives for a gesture of release toward a broader landscape and vast space. At the music terrace in Prospect Park, for instance, sculptures of artists and composers substitute for the Luxembourg Garden's statues of the queens of France or the figures from classical mythology at the Tuileries. Similarly, as Versailles presents a tribute to the King's mother with the Fountain of Latona and a spectacular vista of the Fountain of Apollo, Grand Canal, and distant horizon, in Brooklyn a statue of the recently martyred President Lincoln looks west toward the setting sun across a vast sheet of water.

In 1901 Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. was invited to organize a team of architects and artists to redesign the Mall and monumental core of the nation's capital. This section of the city had become a complete jumble by the turn of the century, despite attempts by A. J. Downing and Calvert Vaux to improve it. Olmsted asked architect Daniel Burnham and sculptor Augustus St. Gaudens, both of whom had been trained at the École des Beaux Arts, to join him. Almost immediately the team set off to Europe to study precedents for their task. France – especially Paris, and a number of châteaux – impressed them the most. The scheme they later produced, known as the McMillan Plan, reflected both Beaux-Arts planning conventions and the deep influence of Le Nôtre.



propose embellishing it with terraces, a grand stair, basins, niches, and sculpture – all features remarkably similar in arrangement and conception to those found at Versailles, Vaux-le-Vicomte, and Chantilly.

Burnham, who had developed a deep interest in urban design, embarked on a number of projects with Edward H. Bennett. One of the founders of the city-planning profession in America, Bennett had also studied at the École des Beaux Arts. Together he and Burnham developed a plan for the City of Chicago between 1906 and 1909: a work of enormous influence that was imbued with post-Le Nôtre characteristics. In a manner reminiscent of recent projects they had seen in Paris, Bennett and Burnham arranged railroads and highways to radiate from the heart of the city and overlaid them with boulevards and streets connecting parks and satellite communities. Draftsman Jules Guerin rendered the Burnham plan in all its grandeur, presenting a dreamy substitution of civic buildings for châteaux and urban fabric for plantations, translating private country estates designed for an aristocracy into urban compositions for a democratic society.

Ten years after the McMillan Commission's plan for Washington, DC, Philadelphia embarked on an ambitious scheme to transform a portion of the city with a grand parkway derived largely from Le Nôtre's greatest boulevard, the Champs Élysées. Striking a diagonal from the central square of the city, this avenue with its attendant gardens stretched to the banks of the Schuylkill River and Fairmount Park. The designer was Jacques-Henri-August Gréber, a landscape architect trained at the École des Beaux Arts, who had arrived in the United States in 1910 to design gardens in New York

This influence is most apparent in the geometric clarity of the two main axes of the Mall and Pennsylvania Avenue, each framed by a sequence of civic and monumental buildings, and the enormous twin allées of American elm trees on the Mall – first bordering a lengthy *tapis vert* and then a linear basin – with a *poché* of neoclassical buildings shaping the diagonal of Pennsylvania Avenue.

Earlier disappointment with the situation of the Washington Monument led the McMillan Commission to

and Pennsylvania – the most famous being those at industrialist Edward T. Stotesbury's Whitmarsh Hall, at Wyndmoor, outside Philadelphia. Impressive, if highly derivative of Le Nôtre's gardens, the Whitmarsh Hall grounds secured Gréber the commission for Philadelphia's parkway, which began construction in 1917. Intended as a grand promenade lined with cultural and civic buildings, it was to include a sequence of public gardens. Beaux Arts buildings were built around Logan Circle and connected to a Greek Revival art museum at the other end by a lushly planted boulevard, but the Great Depression put a stop to further construction. Only a small neoclassical pavilion devoted to Auguste Rodin, designed by another Beaux Arts architect and educator, Paul Philippe Cret, was added along the parkway's majestic length.

Despite changes in fortune, society, and taste following World War II, new American admirers of Le Nôtre emerged. Daniel Urban Kiley (1912–2004) was a radical modernist when a student at Harvard. At the end of the war, he toured France in a jeep and was stunned by the Le Nôtre gardens he visited. He loved their geometry, their crisp forms, the lines and bosques of trees, the fountains and basins of water. The effect upon his work appeared almost immediately upon his return to America. In 1947 he joined Eero Saarinen on the winning competition scheme for the Jefferson Memorial in St. Louis, Missouri, which is dramatically axial and symmetrical, with cross-axial allées of trees. Unable to employ Lombardy poplars like the ones lining Le Nôtre's long canal at Sceaux, Kiley planted fast-growing ash trees close together.

Often Kiley eschewed bilateral symmetry. Working with varying scaled grids, he employed Cartesian geometry to great advantage. His next collaboration with Saarinen, the Miller Residence in Columbus, Indiana, became a masterpiece of mid-century American modernism. The planting plan is an intricate, interlocking arrangement of plants, paths, terraces, and neatly geometric grading. Kiley placed a simple allée of honey locusts terminating in a Henry Moore sculpture in a transverse alignment to the principal view from Saarinen's building, consciously echoing the underlying geometry of several of his favorite châteaux.

In later projects Kiley repeatedly exhibited his fascination with geometry, scale, spacing, and trees. The grounds of the United States Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs consisted of a series of basins and fountains, clipped hedges, bosques, and precise, green carpets of turf in an overall grid plan. A garden at the Art Institute in Chicago is composed solely of quincunxes of hawthorns and fountains. Fountain

Place in Dallas, Texas, is an extensive grid of bald cypress trees, planters, pools, and cascades. And at the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City, Missouri, an extensive *tapis vert* pours down a set of crisply shaped, terraced banks between two broad allées composed of trees, paths, and stairs.

In 1978 Kiley returned to France where he contributed to the second phase of the La Défense development on the western periphery of Paris by extending the Champs Elysées, Le Nôtre's great axis that begins at the Louvre. Reprising what Le Nôtre had done on many occasions, which was to provide an intermediary between the scale of people and that of overlarge buildings and vast distances, Kiley arranged bosques of pollarded plane trees in reassuring patterns to create spaces in which visitors could stroll, sit, socialize, and encounter works of art in dappled light and shade.

Possibly the most grandiose scheme inspired by Le Nôtre in modern disguise was that of the General Motors Technical Center in Warren, Michigan, by Eero Saarinen and Thomas Church, completed in 1955. This part of Michigan is even flatter than the terrain Le Nôtre dealt with, and water for firefighting was vital to the design due to a disastrous fire a few years earlier at another GM plant. Their scheme consists of a vast geometric layout of roads, buildings, trees, and lakes.

Model of the 9/11 Memorial site, New York City, by Peter Walker and Michael Arad.

The central lake, a twenty-two-acre, rectangular basin, has linear plantings of trees both along it and on islands



within it; these lines fragment the rectangle's shape in a manner reminiscent of Mondrian, obscuring its pedigree.

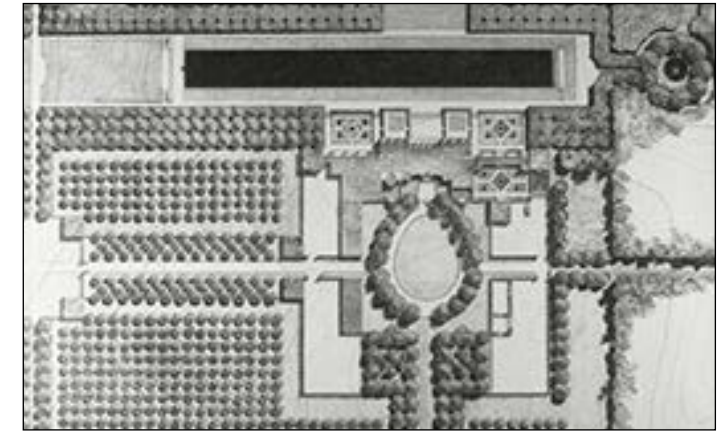
In the next generation Peter Walker and Richard Haag, two prominent landscape architects who were close to both Church and Kiley, produced work that exhibits an appreciation of Le Nôtre. On Kiley's recommendation, Walker had visited Sceaux and been deeply impressed by it. Like Kiley, Walker was a modernist. He'd recently become interested in contemporary artists such as Sol LeWitt, Carl Andre, and Donald Judd, who were being referred to as "minimalists." At Fontainebleau, Vaux-le-Vicomte, Chantilly, and Sceaux, Walker had unexpectedly discovered landscape design that was as minimalist in its palette and formal strategies as it was beautiful and powerful. His work was never the same again. The parks, gardens, and campus designs that followed exhibited remarkable sparseness, clarity, and care in conception and detail. Some of his projects, like Le Nôtre's, are truly serene.

Walker was particularly interested in the flat, planar quality of Le Nôtre's designs. At the 9/11 Memorial at Ground Zero in Lower Manhattan, which Walker designed together with Michael Arad, one finds a dramatically taut ground plane, allées of trees, and the twin giant cascades in the footprints of the World Trade Center towers. One can think of it almost as Chantilly with its great cascade turned inside out, aptly imploding rather than expanding outward.

In the 1980s Richard Haag, famous for his pioneering transformation of a historic gas works in Seattle into an urban park, produced a masterpiece in a second-growth forest on an island in Puget Sound. Its setting, the Bloedel Reserve, consists primarily of areas with Asian and native planting arranged with varying degrees of artifice and composition. In this series of linked gardens, however, one space that invariably stops people in their tracks is a beautifully proportioned reflecting basin enclosed within a tall evergreen hedge. Haag's design

employs the simplest geometry and the fewest elements: an extended sheet of water and reflected sky within a crisp green box. Carved out of the woods in this most unexpected place, it is the very essence of Le Nôtre's oeuvre, absent all architectural or narrative apparatus.

The power of Le Nôtre's creations continues to hold sway in our nation's capital. Between 1966 and 1978, another attempt was made to remove intrusive structures and parking on the Mall, and to restore and clarify the geometry and planting. This scheme was developed by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM) with Kiley, becoming the official plan administered by the National Committee of Fine Arts, the National



Rendered plan drawing of private estate, New Albany, Ohio, by Laurie Olin.

Capitol Planning Commission, and the National Park Service. Spaces seen as "missing teeth" prompted proposals

for new buildings to fill them, resulting in the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, the National Air and Space Museum, and the National Museum of the American Indian. Also proposed were a garden for the National Gallery of Art, a reflecting basin at the base of the Capitol, and the redefinition of the grounds of the Washington Monument. Like the McMillan Plan seventy years earlier, this was an attempt to reassert the ensemble's coherence and elegance, which had been substantially obscured in the intervening decades.

In response to the terrorist attacks of 9/11, the National Park Service held an invited competition to design protection for the Washington Monument. When my partners and I won it, I thought it was an opportunity to improve the civic realm and continue the enhancement that had been underway since 1790. We simplified the site, removed parking lots, reshaped the hill, laid out new walks, and proposed planting trees to

redefine both axes, which had become indiscernible – much as Kiley had attempted in his 1978 plan. If there is one lesson in Le Nôtre’s work, it is to get the big strokes right. Since this project, a rehabilitation of the Mall itself has been under way, focusing on the central *tapis vert* of Jefferson and L’Enfant.

Other projects of ours illustrate the influence of Le Nôtre, whether we were conscious of it at the time or not. On a private estate in Ohio, faced with a waterlogged site, I adopted Le Nôtre’s typical response, reshaping the land to create well-drained portions, and developing a comprehensive scheme that included a six-hundred-foot-long canal, allées, terraces, bosques of native trees, and outlying ponds and rides. What had once been a vast tract of undifferentiated farmland now had a strong character and sense of place. There was no call for pavilions or sculpture or other optically clever elements to be discovered while exploring the site. And yet I would never have come up with its design without Le Nôtre’s example.

Finally, our office has been involved in restoring and completing Gréber’s City Beautiful-movement project, the Benjamin Franklin Parkway in Philadelphia. My partners and I have planned and designed the renovation of Logan Circle, the restoration of the Rodin Museum and grounds, and created the site of the Barnes Foundation, one of the greatest private collections of 19th- and 20th-century French art. Given the Gallic nature of the contents and pedigree of the site, it seemed fitting that the immediate landscape design should partake of echoes of the parkway’s original inspiration – the Champs Élysées and Tuileries. We therefore retained the ranks of Gréber’s plane trees on the parkway and furnished the path between the boulevard and the gallery’s entrance with gravel, horse chestnuts, and an extended linear basin. This path leads to a conifer-lined passageway, and finally along an allée beside the basin. It looks nothing like any project of André Le Nôtre, and yet there are material and sensory properties to the new site clearly inspired by his example.

My admiration and that of my peers for Le Nôtre’s work stems not only from its wit, surprise, boldness, and surplus of aesthetic delight but also from its clarity of purpose, technical mastery, and elegant responses to environmental problems. There is renewed respect today in all design fields for building well and striving for a sustainable future. Beyond his sensitive eye, superb craft, and spatial ideas, André Le Nôtre apprehended ways of using natural features and hydrologic opportunities that have important lessons for our future. His work remains as inspiring, timeless, and stunning as ever. – Laurie Olin

Mapping and “Natural” Garden Design in Late Eighteenth-Century France: The Example of Georges-Louis Le Rouge

Over the course of the eighteenth century, models of garden design changed significantly throughout Europe. First in Great Britain and then across the Continent, geometrical styles framed as national types – Italian, Dutch, French – gave way to irregular arrangements meant to appear natural. In France, for example, the garden was traditionally organized around a framework of axial paths. The central axis was aligned with that of a prominent, adjacent building, integrating garden design and architecture in a way that emphasized bilateral symmetry. Around the mid-1760s, however, a new approach began to emerge. The conventional axes were suppressed, and gardens instead featured undulating ground surfaces with winding paths and streams, irregularly shaped planted areas and water features, and other asymmetrical arrangements meant to seem natural.

The new aesthetic followed a broad cultural shift in thinking about nature – as Diana Balmori succinctly described it, from nature as “Reason, with discoverable laws” to nature as a condition “that has not been touched by human hands.” Ironically, to make gardens seem natural, many designers relied on the Picturesque design practice of configuring space to emulate views of nature idealized in art. Less well known, however, is the fact that mapping – representing landscape in *plan*, as if from above – also played a formative role in reshaping garden design in France.

In the decades preceding the emergence of “natural” design in France, advances in topographical mapping literally transformed the image of the national territory in the eyes of government administrators and landowners alike. The first map showing geographically correct borders for the country was completed in 1718, and a federal campaign

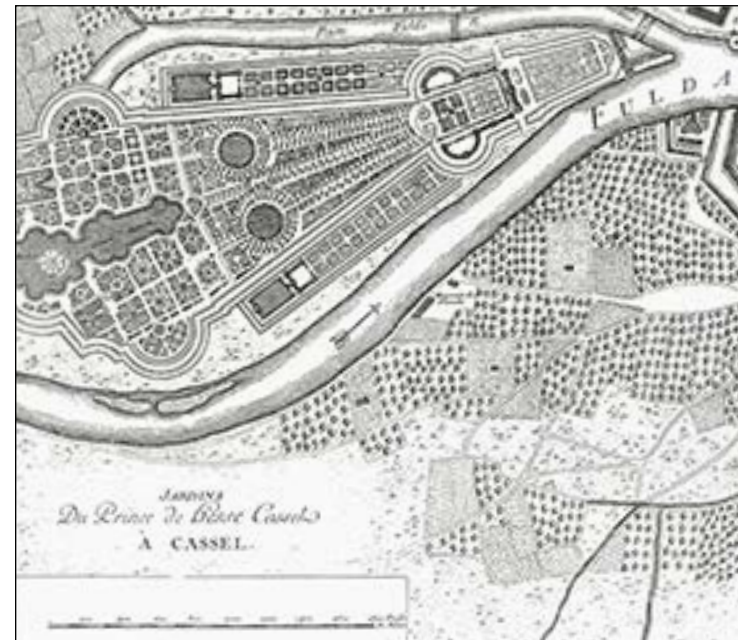
Plan of the Karlsau garden, along the Fulda River, with fortifications of the city of Kassel visible at the upper right. Le Rouge, *Détail, cahier 4*, plate 13 (1776).

to survey and map the French interior began in the late 1740s, with finished maps appearing in print beginning in 1756. An awareness of maps grew rapidly among cultural elites, as did map literacy. In technical and administrative contexts, topographical mapping was theorized as a new, mimetic art, and scientifically surveyed maps were idealized as “copies” of nature. As such they were ideal models for “natural” garden design in France, indulging a long-established interest in the plan format there.

Also, members of the French financial elite tended to be more urban and centralized than were their British counterparts, investing heavily in relatively smaller plots of land in and around Paris, where view-based design – easily rendered in large-scale, rural contexts – was less viable. Seeing maps as garden plans was therefore well suited to the full range of spatial contexts in which the new approach flourished: from small, flat, urban lots enclosed by walls – where Picturesque composition was severely limited, if not impossible – to large, rural estates incorporating existing topography.

As advances in mapping helped to prepare the ground for “natural” garden design in France, growing interest in that approach created professional opportunities for individuals with knowledge of surveying and mapmaking. The “natural” approach prioritized a different range of skills than those used in traditional French garden design, including the ability to conceive and represent landscape forms in plan. For example, just as roads and rivers depicted on a map were understood to continue beyond its edges, so paths and

streams might be made to wind across a garden as if unconstrained by property boundaries. Such practices were highly suggestive because they implied both physical and symbolic continuity between gardens and the larger landscape. Their new importance helps to explain how, at a time when garden design had not yet been professionalized in France, many individuals with experience of surveying and mapping – such as Louis Carrogis, called Carromontelle; Charles-Joseph, prince de Ligne; Francesco



Bettini; and Jean-Marie Morel – became involved with the new approach.

The career of Georges-Louis Le Rouge, a successful surveyor and map publisher who became an important contributor to the new movement in garden design, exemplifies the connection between mapping and the new garden aesthetic. Between 1775 and 1789, Le Rouge published a large series of garden-design prints known variously as the *Détail des nouveaux jardins à la mode* and *Jardins anglo-chinois*. Le Rouge included hundreds of images of built and unbuilt work drawn from a broad range of published and unpublished sources. Today, many consider the *Détail des nouveaux jardins* to be the most important visual record of garden design in late eighteenth-century France. Yet its context and significance are not widely understood. The circumstances behind its publication offer key insights into the link between mapping and “natural” garden design in France.

Le Rouge became involved with garden design through his experience as a surveyor and a map publisher. Born in Hanover (Electorate of Brunswick-Lüneburg, now Germany), he first approached landscape through mapping. His earliest known work was a map of Alsace (early 1730s) that was probably made for military use. Between 1733 and 1735, Le Rouge worked as an *ingénieur géographe* (geographical engineer) for the comte de Clermont, an officer in the French army. How he came to the position is unknown, but his fluency in German was surely a contributing factor, as Clermont was then serving in the War of the Polish Succession (1733–38). During multiple related campaigns in the German states, Le Rouge worked on reconnaissance operations. He surveyed campsites, battlegrounds, and areas to be crossed by troops, noting features of landscape that might affect the course of military action. Officers then used his drawings as tools in strategizing.

Such use of mapping was relatively new. The profession of *ingénieur géographe* had emerged as a specialty in military engineering only a few decades before, at the end of the seventeenth century. Surveying had long been recognized as a necessary skill for military engineers charged with the design and construction of fortifications, but new expectations



Map of Chantilly and its surroundings. Le Rouge, *Détail, cahier 1*, plate 17 (1775).

description of the Favorite, a large pleasure garden overlooking the Rhine just south of Mainz, military observa-

tions are interspersed with aesthetic appreciations.

By 1741, Le Rouge had settled in Paris and entered the practice of commercial cartography. The fact that he was operating his own press within a year of his stint with Frézier suggests that he had personal connections to the printing industry. As a map publisher, he could recycle his earlier work as an *ingénieur géographe*. For example, his *Théâtre de la guerre en Allemagne* (1741) was a compilation of camp and battle plans from the French campaigns of 1733, 1734, and 1735 that he had surveyed and drawn himself. Map publishing was an ideal pursuit for an *ingénieur géographe* with access to a press, and with the *Théâtre*, Le Rouge embarked on a career that lasted almost forty years.

During periods of war, Le Rouge specialized in maps and plans designed to help the public situate battles fought by French forces. For example, during the War of the Austrian Succession (1740–48), he published a plan of the French siege of Ypres (1744), at which he had been present. And his plan of the Battle of Maxen (1759; published 1760) was based on a field sketch by the prince de Ligne, who later became a prominent authority on garden design. (In fact, the prince’s garden at Baudour (Hainaut Province, Belgium) would be included in the *Détail des nouveaux jardins*.)

In 1748, Le Rouge published two works that signaled large ambitions for his press. The first was a portable world atlas intended for use by military personnel and travelers. The second was a pedagogical treatise on geography that Le Rouge wrote himself. As Le Rouge had a commercial interest in promoting map literacy, he advertised in the treatise that he could arrange for instructors to teach geography to interested parties – and could even supply female teachers for convents.

Also in 1748, Le Rouge embarked on another peacetime enterprise related to his training as an *ingénieur géographe*: private surveying. Before the eighteenth century, estate mapping was uncommon in France, but by the middle of the century, landowners were becoming increasingly aware of its utility in land management. To capture that market, Le Rouge advertised that he could survey and draw maps and plans of all sorts.

After two prosperous decades, Le Rouge stopped making maps in the early 1760s, perhaps in an effort to retire. In 1768,

pertaining to reconnaissance expanded the scope of work. To become an *ingénieur géographe*, Le Rouge would have studied surveying, mathematics, engineering, and draftsmanship.

In 1738, Le Rouge was appointed a lieutenant in the regiment of the comte de Saxe. By the next year, he was again in the German states, this time working with the Savoyard navigator and engineer Amédée-François Frézier (1682–1773). Le Rouge likely came to the region either with the comte de Saxe or as part of the team of engineers commissioned to map the Palatinate, a territory conquered by French forces in 1689–97. According to Le Rouge, Frézier and his collaborator – a certain “Capitaine Degroot,” engineer to the Count Palatine of the Rhine – were impressed by his work and suggested that he would have made an excellent aide-de-camp – a compliment that motivated him to study military theory, geography, and topography.

In 1740, still in the German territories, Le Rouge composed a long, three-part *mémoire* (memorandum) on the Electorate of Mainz. When circumstances allowed, French military engineers used their spare time to write detailed descriptions of places of strategic interest; the army then collected those documents for future reference. Although scientific in purpose, the *mémoires* addressed more than military concerns, combining topographical, historical, and cultural descriptions with the aim of representing the unique qualities of a particular place. Le Rouge’s text is a perfect example of the type and demonstrates his capacity for careful analysis on both local and regional scales. In addition, it confirms that Le Rouge had been trained early in his career to think of gardens as integral parts of landscape. In his



Design for a *jardin à l'anglaise* drawn by the prince de Croÿ “after his return from London.” Le Rouge, *Détail, cahier 1*, plate 23 (1775).

he returned to publishing – seemingly due to financial necessity – but by that time, the public’s interest in military works had declined, so

he turned to maps of North America. Meanwhile, however, residential development was booming in and around Paris, and Le Rouge recognized a potential market for both his surveying skills and garden design prints. His subsequent shift in professional focus was astute, as it involved practices of representation and distribution in which he was already highly experienced. Also, whereas maps became outmoded as new information became available, garden images had an unlimited shelf life and were therefore more secure as investments.

It is also likely that Le Rouge was inspired by the success of a recent book: the French edition of Thomas Whately’s *Observations on Modern Gardening* (1770), released in 1771 as *L’Art de former les jardins modernes*. That work was published by Charles-Antoine Jombert, père, a specialist in technical works pertaining to architecture, military sciences, and mathematics, whose shop was only a block away from that of Le Rouge. The two publishers had collaborated at least once, and they shared an interest in military engineering and surveying.

Le Rouge’s monumental *Détail des nouveaux jardins à la mode*, issued in twenty-one installments (*cahiers*), ultimately included 492 engraved plates. Seventy-two French gardens were represented, either in their entirety or in part, along with gardens in Great Britain, Ireland, Germany, the Nether-

lands, Austria, and Italy. The series included a host of original designs by Le Rouge’s contemporaries and nearly one hundred plates depicting gardens belonging to the emperor of China. Like the English, the Chinese were thought to have anticipated the turn to “natural” design in France: hence the term *jardin anglo-chinois* – possibly coined by Le Rouge himself – in the titles of many of the *cahiers*.

In recent decades, historians have characterized Le Rouge as a distributor of garden images, implying that he published content by others but did not make original contributions. This portrayal is misleading in several respects, most obviously because many images in the *Détail des nouveaux jardins à la mode* were produced by Le Rouge

or his close collaborators – including at least seven plans of recently completed gardens surveyed by Le Rouge himself. It is also important to remember that prints were an important vehicle for design ideas in early modern Europe. By disseminating his *cahiers*, Le Rouge was participating actively in the new developments in garden design. Similarly overlooked are the circumstances behind the production of the *Détail*, which offer key insights into how mapping contributed to that evolution.

Published over about fifteen years, Le Rouge marketed his ambitious project as an index of new taste and accomplishments in garden design. However, the contents were eclectic – far more than is generally understood – and their production was not systematic. Selections were guided by many factors other than style, such as citations in contemporary texts, personal connections with image makers, economy in page layout, and simple availability. Many inclusions were opportunistic – available to Le Rouge through his work as a mapmaker and publisher. For example, in the ninth *cahier* (1781), Le Rouge published a plan of a retreat belonging to the prince of Hesse-Kassel. The image had been drawn in 1761 during the Seven Years’ War by an engineer in the French army at the request of a military provisioner and “man of taste.” Le Rouge happened to have the original in his possession and so incorporated it in the *Détail des nouveaux jardins*, just as he had recycled reconnaissance sketches in his commercial

atlases. In the ninth *cahier* he recycled a map surveyed and published by others a decade earlier because it included in one corner Charles de Meulan’s château and garden at Ablois – although the scale of the image was too small to be useful, and a vignette of a cascade failed to clarify the arrangement of the larger garden.

Equally significant, though, is the assertion implicit in these selections that a map could be reframed as a design image. For example, the plan of the Karlsau garden in the fourth *cahier* (1776) was seemingly copied or reprinted from the lower left corner of a map of the city and surroundings of Kassel (Landgraviate of Hesse-Kassel, now Germany). The Karlsau, which had been laid out as a Baroque garden a century earlier, in no way represented the new direction in design. But the larger landscape in which it was depicted – with a river, fields, orchards, and residential properties – closely resembled a plan for a new-style garden and therefore made visual sense within the context of the *Détail des nou-*



Plan of the gardens at Ermenonville. Le Rouge, *Détail, cahier 3*, plate 18 (1776).

veaux jardins. Nothing else explains its inclusion there.

Seeing maps as copies of nature, and therefore as logical models for garden design in plan, might also explain why Le Rouge included a map of Chantilly and its surroundings in the first *cahier* (1775) and one of Munich and its vicinity in the eighth (1781). Although new-style gardens had been completed at Chantilly, Le Rouge's image did not include them – an astonishing lapse, considering the subject of the *Détail des nouveaux jardins*. At the same time, if imagined at a different scale, the whole image resembled a design for a “natural” garden. Similarly, the map of Munich and its surroundings had no clear relevance to the contents of the eighth or any other *cahier*, yet it evoked garden plans elsewhere in the *Détail des nouveaux jardins* – from small-scale works, such as the prince de Croÿ's scheme for a *jardin à l'anglaise*, to designs for large properties, such as the Marquis de Girardin's estate at Ermenonville.

In the context of the *Détail des nouveaux jardins à la mode*, blurring the distinction between scientific depictions of topography and imaginative designs for “natural” gardens was not limited to plans. For example, while working as an *ingénieur géographe* in 1734, Le Rouge drew several rocky outcroppings in the forest at Fontainebleau – visual studies of a sort commonly made by civil and military surveyors during that period. Fifty years later, he recycled those images in the *Détail des nouveaux jardins* as “Idées Pour la Construction des Rochers dans les Jardins Anglais” (Ideas for the Construction of Rockeries in English Gardens).

The close correlation between mapping and “natural” garden design in the work of Le Rouge was in keeping with the technical and conceptual overlaps between those two concerns. Recognizing that connection invites a new interpretation of the turn to “natural” design in eighteenth-century France. Until now, historical accounts have described that shift exclusively in terms of Picturesque design, with its idealized views of nature based on scenic depictions in art. But mapping offered another angle from which to link gardens and nature – one that literally reoriented the view from the horizontal to the vertical. As a model for “natural” design in France, mapping proved to be in various ways more appropriate than Picturesque composition – not only due to traditional interest in the plan as a format of design but also because it was no less suitable for spatially constrained urban settings than it was for suburban and rural sites, where design features could merge with those of the larger landscape. Thus mapping contributed in meaningful ways to the full range and distinctive character of garden design in late eighteenth-century France. – David L. Hays

Rousseau, Reverie, and the Spectacle of Botany in the Eighteenth-Century French Garden

During what would be the final years of his life, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–78) composed the essays that would constitute the *Reveries of the Solitary Walker*. In the Seventh Walk, Rousseau wrote of his decision to revisit an earlier passion: the study of botany. As a younger man, he had assembled both an impressive botanical library and his own herbarium – a collection of dried specimens that he had gathered and studied. But, as he explained in the essay, he had abandoned the pursuit – selling his library and herbarium, as neither seemed necessary. Then, as he found himself settled in Paris and filling his days traversing the city, his passion for botany was re-ignited. He devoted much of the Seventh Walk to exploring why and to what end. On the one hand, he admits that he sees botany as a “fruitless study where I neither make any progress nor learn anything useful.” And yet, he writes, “fixing my attention on the objects [the plants] surrounding me . . . made me look closely for the first time at the details of the great pageant of nature, which until then I had hardly ever contemplated otherwise than as a total and undivided spectacle.”

Just months after writing the last of the reveries, Rousseau accepted an offer from René-Louis de Girardin to reside in his garden at Ermenonville, one of the first Picturesque gardens created in France, whose aesthetic had been inspired by Rousseau's teachings. Begun as early as 1762, Girardin's garden, with its hills, valleys, woods, marshes, stream, and lake, offered the whole spectacle of nature. Rousseau would spend the last months of his life in this garden, thinking and botanizing, before dying there on July 2, 1778. Long before this period, however, Rousseau had begun writing about the place – social and political – of “man” in Nature, and how it could be improved upon; many trees have been sacrificed ever since to scholarly analyses of his theories. But what role did plants perform in his Nature? And what was their significance in the landscapes he inspired?

Rousseau's most explicit discussion of Nature and landscape is to be found in his 1761 epistolary novel, *Julie ou la nouvelle Héloïse*. The narrator, Saint-Preux, devotes one of his letters to an account of Julie's Elysium, her private garden. The Elysium was a secluded space, locked and hidden from the public. It was also a gendered space: the domain of the

object of Saint-Preux's affections and admiration. Once granted entrance, he discovered a place of delight for all the senses: “I was struck,” Saint-Preux writes, “by a pleasantly cool sensation which dark shade, bright and lively greenery, flowers scattered on every side, the bubbling of flowing water, and the songs of a thousand birds impressed on my imagination at least as much as my senses; but at the same time I thought I was looking at the wildest, most solitary place in nature.”

If wildness was the desired effect, however, it was a carefully cultivated wildness. As Julie gently observes of her garden, “It is true . . . that nature did it all, but under my direction, and there is nothing here that I have not designed.” That is, while Rousseau rejected overt artifice, he did not pretend to imagine that the garden was created without serious effort. “I see no human footprints,” exclaims Saint-Preux, to which Julie's husband, Monsieur de Wolmar, replies, “That is because we have taken great care to erase them.” The tilled soil, for example, is customarily immediately reseeded with grass, “which hides the traces of labor.” The work of making plants grow was necessary, but it would not be on display.

Certainly, plantings were not to be subjected to the symmetrical pruning and shaping that had come to characterize the French garden over the course of the seventeenth century. This formalism, according to Monsieur de Wolmar, was in poor taste: “The mistake of so-called people of taste is to want art everywhere, and never to be satisfied unless art is apparent; whereas true taste consists in hiding art; especially where the works of nature are concerned.” This declaration, reminiscent of Castiglione's *Courtier*, is a plea for elegance cultivated with a light hand. In Elysium, there is an art to deploying plants to achieve the desired illusion of wildness. Walls are masked “with thick bushes that make the confines of the place look like the outer edge of a wood,” and vines are encouraged to twine unchecked in trees and structures in the garden.

Rousseau wrote with botanically rich specificity of the plants growing in Julie's Elysium. “Although I did not find exotic plants and products of the Indies,” Saint-Preux observes of a transformed orchard, “I found the local ones arranged and combined in a manner that yielded a cheerier and pleasanter effect. The verdant grass, lush, but short and thick was mingled with wild thyme, balsam, garden thyme, marjoram, and other aromatic herbs. A thousand wild flowers shone there, among which the eye was surprised to detect a few garden varieties, which seemed to grow naturally with

the others.” In another corner of the garden, he saw “without order or symmetry underbrush of rose, raspberry, and currant bushes, patches of lilac, hazel, elderberry, mockorange, broom, trifolium, which decked the earth while giving it a fallow appearance.” He walked along winding pathways “bordered by these flowered woods, covered with a thousand garlands of Judean vine, creeper, hops, bindweed, Bryony, clematis, and other plants of that sort, among which honeysuckle and jasmine saw fit to mingle.” Rousseau’s list of plants is intriguing, for while he specifies that the garden contains no exotic imports, it does include “a few garden varieties” as well as roses, clematis, honeysuckle, and jasmine growing among the “local” and “wild” species. In other words, the careful selection and artful mixing of native species with specimens normally included in formal plantings contributes to the garden’s “artless” effect.

Scholars have failed to tie Rousseau definitively and directly to the construction of the first Picturesque gardens in France, and yet the *Nouvelle Héloïse* proffers more precise advice on the subject than the French theoretical texts that would be published over the next decade. Indeed, one might speculate on the extent to which being too proscriptive would not have been in keeping with the idea of the Picturesque: “Imitation, subjecting everything to its power, imposes laws on trees, flowers, water, greenery,” writes Claude-Henri Watelet in the first French treatise on the Picturesque garden, *Essay on Gardens* – and such laws were now unwelcome. But these theorists did offer suggestions on how to achieve an aesthetic similar to that celebrated by Rousseau.

First and foremost, plants had to be freed from the absolute regularity and regimentation that had governed the gardens of Louis XIV and Louis XV. Trees must be randomly planted, Watelet writes – no straight rows, no equidistant plantings – as if they had grown from “seeds



Julie and Saint-Preux, the protagonists in *Julie ou la nouvelle Héloïse* by Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

scattered by the wind.” After all, he adds, that “is what painters enthusiastically espouse, and unless they are absolutely compelled, they never represent palisades or allées that are totally straight.” In fact, according to Watelet, the “touchstone” of a Picturesque scene in a park or garden should be the feeling it evokes in artists: “If a scene is worthy of nature’s approval, the painter is delighted. He will want to imitate it, and if he does, his rendition will be stimulating and lovely.” In this passage, Watelet links the success of the garden designer to his ability to create a “natural” scene in the garden that a painter would be inspired to record in paint.

Flowers are to be treated in the same way. If they are crowded into traditional symmetrical beds, Watelet explains, “their resulting abundance . . . may weaken the impression they are supposed to create, in the same way that their symmetrical arrangement conceals their natural variety.” Instead, they should be used sparingly: “Beware of extravagance. By using flowers to enrich country sites, you can make them enticing to those who come upon such wealth unexpectedly.” Such an approach has the added benefit of saving money: “The fastidious cultivation of flowers entails no doubt expenses and upkeep disproportionate perhaps to the pleasure they provide. . . .

By using an array of flowers not necessarily credited with ideal perfection and rarity, it would be possible to carpet whole meadows in an unusual manner and give the length of a stream’s banks a most pleasant and cheerful appearance.” Such an approach is a wholesale rejection of the cultural aesthetic and meaning of the French flower garden that prevailed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, in which rarity and perfection (and price) were crucial to how flowers were collected by *curieux fleuristes* and deployed at the Trianon in the 1680s, at Marly in 1700, and at Choisy in the 1750s.

If Watelet was specific about what plantations should *not* be, the Marquis de Girardin enumerated their uses. In his *Essay on Landscape; or, on the Means of Improving and Embellishing the Country Round our Habitations*, the author identified five functions that plants could perform in the garden – which he himself made use of at Ermenonville – to manufacture the sort of “wildness” celebrated by Rousseau in the *Nouvelle Héloïse*. First, plants could serve to create or frame perspectives, connecting “the best distances with the point of view from your house.” Second, they could add height and contour to otherwise even ground. Third, they could be employed to hide “disagreeable objects.” Fourth, they could create an illusion of expansiveness by camouflaging the termination of garden spaces, suggesting a perpetual continuation beyond the plantation. Finally, they could give “an agreeable outline” to the surfaces of land and water.

For inclusion in the garden, Girardin recommends three categories of trees: large “forest-trees” (oak, elm, beech, and chestnut), “aquatic” trees (poplar and alder), and “mountain” trees (birch, pine, cedar, and juniper). But to determine which trees to choose, he returns to the relationship between landscape painting and gardening: “As to the choice of trees, the subject of your picture (as I have already said) should determine it.” He does not recommend specific flowers or flowering shrubs, although he refers to their presence – “a crystal stream reflect[ing] the colour of the roses growing on its banks”; the “perfume of the flowers . . . [that] charm all the senses”; the banks of the cascades “adorned with flowering shrubs and sweet-smelling plants.” In his most botanically explicit passage, he describes entering a wood in which:

wild hops and honeysuckles form a thousand wreaths and garlands over our heads. The moss and young grass are watered by small springs, and in the bushes of sweet-briar and wild roses which grow on their banks, the nightingale “sings sweetest her love labored song.” Upon some natural beds of moss we can repose ourselves, and stop to listen to her brilliant notes with additional pleasure, from the delightful odour of the rose and hawthorn, joined to that of the violet, the wild harebell, and the lily of the valley, which grow in profusion wherever the light can penetrate.

Plants, then, according to Girardin, contribute to the sensory experience of the garden, as they did in Julie’s Elysium.

The horticultural particulars in Girardin’s writing suggest a modern botanical age – one in which Rousseau the botanist was firmly planted as well. If, in the works of the theorists, often botanically indistinguishable trees, shrubs, and flowers were principally discussed in terms of their aesthetic

effect, practical information circulated in gardening manuals, botany texts, and visual resources, such as the prints of Picturesque gardens by Georges-Louis Le Rouge. The text accompanying Le Rouge's "Tableau de la Plantation générale de tous les Arbres, Arbrisseaux et Sousarbrisseaux existants en France qui supportent nos Hivers," which Le Rouge credited to Antoine Richard, gardener to Louis XV, Louis XVI, and Marie-Antoinette, explains that modern gardens "require that everything be varied"; the tableau of trees and shrubs has been created to aid readers with that aim. Arranged by height, the trees are depicted both in profile and from the front, to demonstrate the theatrical effect that careful planting in a garden can achieve. In addition, Le Rouge, seemingly informed by Richard, points out that leaf shape and color contribute to visual variety. The charts identify the trees and shrubs by the names attributed to them by Jussieu, Richard, and Linnaeus and categorize them by size. Le Rouge also celebrates variety in leaf shape in the "Arbre Figuré Portant diverses Espèces de Feuilles des différentes Arbres, Arbrisseaux, Arbustes et de quelques Plantes qui se trouvent dans les Fôrets et Bois taillis du Comte d'Eu" – an imagined tree bearing the leaves of sixty-one different species.

Le Rouge's attention to enumerating such distinctions in his plates both acknowledged and fed the already-fashionable desire to furnish new gardens with new species, many of which came from foreign sources. Not everyone approved: Girardin, perhaps again taking his cues from Julie's garden, which contains no "exotics," cautions his readers against worrying too much about these matters. "In landscape, and at a distance, the diversity of color results from the different accidents of light, more than from the variety of the trees: leave it then to the light," he advises, "to produce this effect; all the pains of the best gardener will not do so much." Unlike many of his contemporaries, but in keeping with Rousseau, he is similarly skeptical about the importance of foreign trees, pointing out that they "are not only difficult and expensive to raise, and still more difficult to preserve, but they seldom accord well with the trees of the country." Many chose not to heed his advice, however, creating Nature with plants from distant corners of the earth.

Trees had a metaphorical dimension in the French Picturesque garden as well. A visitor to Ermenonville would have found in traversing the park many *fabriques*, or follies, in various states of artificial decay, a look achieved in part by

encouraging vines to grow in cracks and crevices and popularized in the paintings of Hubert Robert. Girardin's park included not only a classical temple to philosophy, but also a *maison du philosophe* – a "philosopher's house," or hermitage. Commonly identified with solitude, contemplation, and thought, hermitages were often constructed around part of a tree. Some of them were root houses, like those shown in designs by Le Rouge; others featured trees sprouting from their rooftops, as did the *maison du philosophe* at Ermenonville – which became the home of Rousseau himself.

This fusion of nature and philosophy was highly conscious: the trees growing in, on, and through the hermitage and sprouting from the cracks of the simulated ruins connected the garden temporally to much older traditions of thought. They were meant not only to evoke something lost – a past age now in decay – but also to serve as a reminder that modern society continued to grow upon that foundation, a living "tree of knowledge." Such plantings harkened back to ancient philosophical traditions even as they pointed toward a modern botanical age.

Although Rousseau celebrated the plants in Julie's garden for the sensory delights that they contributed, he was also a serious botanist who reveled in the exploration and classification of individual specimens. For Rousseau, plants brought together the sensory and the cerebral. The botanical examination of plants had no practical application for Rousseau: he had no interest in the medicinal uses of plants. And he acknowledged that classification itself led to the creation of no significant knowledge; it did not "throw any real light on natural history or the vegetable kingdom." And yet it had its uses. In 1771 Rousseau began a series of letters on botany at the request of a family friend, Madeleine Delessert, who asked Rousseau to instruct her young daughter, Marguerite-Madeleine, in the study of plants. In *Letters on the Elements of Botany*, which was published in Rousseau's collected works after his death, the philosopher expounded upon the purpose of botanical investigation, both for his young female pupil and, implicitly, for a broader audience.

Rousseau had already explained in *Emile* that young women were to be reared to become future wives and mothers. Great care was to be taken to prevent young women from going morally astray, he notes in *Letters on the Elements of Botany*, and in this effort botany could prove useful: "The study of nature abates the taste for frivolous amusements, prevents the tumult of the passions, and provides the mind with a nourishment which is salutary, by filling it with an object most worthy of its contemplations," he writes in the

first letter. In the third letter, he describes botanical study for Marguerite-Madeleine as "that peaceable and delightful study, which fills up those voids in our time that others dedicate to idleness or something worse."

Misogyny is inherent in Rousseau's definition of gender roles, and his confining of women to the realm of Nature would contribute to their exclusion from active public life. At the same time, his advocacy of botanical study for his young female pupil points to the larger importance of botany and plants in his own thinking. He explains that his pupil is to progress beyond simple recognition of plant specimens by sight to the study of plant structures and systems, which she would find more intellectually engaging. Furthermore, he adds, "It will always be useful to her to learn how to see, whatever she looks at, well." In other words, the careful and close examination of plants would cultivate in her an ability to examine and contemplate the larger world.

For Rousseau, however, the study of botany led him less into the wider world than into his own thoughts, as he articulated in the *Reveries*: "The pleasure of going to some lonely spot in search of new plants is combined with that of escaping from my persecutors, and when I reach places where there is no trace of men I breathe freely." Once there, "The deeper the solitude that surrounds me, the greater the need I feel at such times for something to fill this vacuum, and where my imagination cannot provide me with ideas or my memory rejects them, the earth makes up for this with the many objects which it produces spontaneously . . . before my eyes." Plants were a tool with which to think. As John C. O'Neal explains it in his essay, "The Perceptual Metamorphosis of the Solitary Walker," "Botany . . . attracts Rousseau because it necessitates a rational level of observing that can give a momentary sense of fixity to things and to the self." To think about plants was an intellectual exercise that led the mind to other thoughts.

Such reverie could be found in genuine wilderness or in a natural setting that purported to offer such solitude. Rousseau describes one such "botanical expedition" with amusement: "I finally reached a corner so deeply hidden away that I do not think I have ever seen so wild a spot." Many plant specimens there "occupied and delighted" him. Yet, he continues, "gradually succumbing to the powerful impression of my surroundings, I forgot about botany and plants, sat down on pillows of *lycopodium* and mosses, and began dreaming to my heart's content, imagining that I was in a sanctuary unknown to the whole universe, a place where my

persecutors would never find me out.” Not long afterward his reverie “became tinged with a feeling of pride” when it occurred to him that he might have been the first to discover this place. But this train of thought was interrupted by sounds that, upon investigation, turned out to come from a stocking mill not twenty yards away. Rousseau laughs at his own vanity, but by recounting the episode he also intimates that reverie can be induced by Nature in all its forms: Nature untamed, Nature contrived, or even in Nature next door to an eighteenth-century factory.

For Rousseau’s women, the cultivation of gardens and the study of the plants were essentially virtuous endeavors tied to their roles as wives and mothers. When Saint-Preux suggests to Julie that her Elysium is perhaps a “superfluous amusement,” she responds emotionally that she finds purpose in her garden as she does in raising her children. “The upkeep of this place,” she contends, “requires more attention than effort; it is more a matter of giving a certain shape to the plants’ branches than of spading and tilling the soil; I want [my children] one day to become my little gardeners.” She envisions the garden, with the labor and thought that went into achieving it, as her legacy to them. Meditating on the domestic bliss that Julie and her family enjoy in the verdant paradise of their creation induces Saint-Preux to conclude that “there is in the meditation of honest thoughts a sort of well-being that the wicked have never known; it is to enjoy being alone with oneself. . . . For the enjoyment of virtue is a wholly inner one and is per-



Ermenonville, Island of Poplars, with nursing mother and child in the foreground.

philosopher. The landscape that had stimulated Rousseau’s thought became a pilgrimage site – as well as a tourist destination for those seeking reverie via proximity to celebrity. When English pottery manufacturer Enoch Wood produced Staffordshire featuring a series of French scenes, views of Ermenonville were among them.

We cannot know what Rousseau would have made of the commercialization of the Nature he celebrated. But perhaps he would have responded much as he did to the irony of finding botanical reverie outside a stocking mill: it was all a means to an end. – Elizabeth Hyde

ceptible only to him who feels it.”

Rousseau’s notions of botanically inspired domestic virtue and womanhood contributed to the reception of the Picturesque garden as a gendered space. While Jennifer Jones has explored the connections between Rousseau and changing women’s fashion in “Repackaging Rousseau: Femininity and Fashion in Old Regime France,” the fashionable gendering of the Picturesque was in full view in commercial representations of Ermenonville. When the *Promenade ou Itinéraire des Jardins d’Ermenonville* was published in 1788, the accompanying engravings by Merigot demonstrated the extent to which the spaces had become identified with feminine and pastoral roles. Elite women are rowed pleasantly across the lake or give themselves over to emotion at the Altar of Reverie, while lovely peasant women carry their harvest across cascades or shepherd children and livestock along garden paths. In an engraving depicting the Isle of Poplars, where Rousseau was buried and his tomb erected, a seated young mother nurses her child in full view. The landscape and the plants within it have become a moralizing reminder of women’s roles.

After Rousseau’s death and burial at Ermenonville, the property became even more inextricably linked to the thinker, and a visit to the garden became a popular means of communing with the dead

Parc Monceau: An Appreciation

Years ago, on a brilliant autumn afternoon, I was in Paris’s haughty Parc Monceau. The temperature was cool, the air crisp, the lawns a velvety emerald green. The old trees, in full fall color, were majestic and stately, and the shrubs and flower beds lovely. Everything – for this is France – was impeccably maintained. Equally impeccable were the park visitors, a random sampling of Parisians befitting a novel by Marcel Proust, who had once lived nearby.

Suddenly the equilibrium of the day was disrupted by a solitary jogger: a muscular, swarthy, thirty-something young man whose lightly clad body was decidedly at odds with the well-dressed park public. Jogging was yet to become the fad it is today in Paris, and this runner was more than a singular presence; he was a threat to the decorum of the park. Stopping to stretch and perform his in-place calisthenics, he removed his T-shirt, stripping down to his gray-green running shorts. The late-afternoon rays of the sun shone upon his body as he performed his athletic ritual. All eyes were drawn to him – in curiosity, contempt, and perhaps desire – as if he were naked and doing something indecent. His routine finished, he grabbed his T-shirt and ran off.

I couldn’t help but think of Manet’s *Dejeuner sur l’herbe*, the famous painting in which two fully dressed young men share the canvas with a starkly naked woman. When exhibited in 1863, it provoked a scandal that I had never fully appreciated until that long-ago day in the Parc Monceau.

Times have changed. Today the Parc Monceau is overrun with joggers, male and female, equally dressed down for the activity. On a recent visit, I also saw three would-be tight-rope walkers practicing on a wire strung between two trees and couples walking on the lawns who were untroubled by the long-standing prohibition “Keep off the Grass” that was apparently no longer enforced. Those not engaged in active recreation were using the park civilly and respectfully, walking or sitting, in couples or in groups, discoursing on anything and everything – a favorite French pastime – or reading on a park bench. Others simply took in the public spectacle.

The Parc Monceau has a distinguished and pedigreed history. It is one of the rare examples of an eighteenth-century Parisian park designed in the then-fashionable Picturesque style. Indeed, the park was established during a seminal decade – the 1770s – when the recently introduced “English style,” or naturalistic gardening, was the rage in Paris. Monceau was designed by Louis Carrogis, known as Carmon-telle, as a private estate on the outskirts of Paris for Louis-Philippe-Joseph d’Orléans, the duc de Chartres. One of the

richest men in France and a notorious libertine, the duke was a distant but high-ranking cousin of King Louis XVI; should the Bourbons die out, the Orléans bloodline would succeed to the throne. He renounced his heritage during the Revolution, however, assuming the republican name Philippe-Égalité, and voted for the death of his beleaguered cousin. Nevertheless, he fell to the guillotine during the Terror.

Before the Revolution, Monceau enjoyed wide renown as a playground for the aristocracy and privileged classes. Carmontelle's ambitious and ingenious – some said incoherent – design was nothing short of an enchanted wonderland, which he called a “land of illusion” (*pays d'illusion*) that evoked “all eras and all places” (*tous les temps et tous les pays*). It was intended to amuse a crowd that bored easily, quickly, and habitually. A Disney World *avant la lettre*, Carmontelle's Monceau was a potpourri of follies, statuary, flowers, and landscape and water features culled from around the world, from antiquity to the present. Over eighty such elements adorned the garden, including an Egyptian obelisk, a pyramid, a classical temple, a Roman ruin, a naumachia, a Dutch windmill, Turkish and Tartar tents, a minaret, and a Chinese-themed merry-go-round. Less international were a farm complex, chemistry laboratory, and bird shoot. An assortment of statues from or inspired by Greek and Roman antiquity included an eighteenth-century copy by Edmé Bouchardon of the Hellenistic *Barbarini Faun*. Contemporary sculpture included Jean-Antoine Houdon's *Bather* and Jean-Baptiste Pigalle's *Amitié*, which had come from the collection of Louis XV's mistress, Madame de Pompadour. (Today, Bouchardon's *Faun* and Pigalle's *Amitié* are in the Louvre, while Houdon's *Bather* is in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.)

Some of the garden's ruins and structures were made from recycled material, such as the colonnade of the naumachia – still standing – which belonged to an unfinished sepulcher said to have been commissioned by Catherine de' Medici for the House of Valois at the Cathedral of Saint Denis. Likewise recycled – or repurposed – are some original features that have found homes outside today's park,

such as the Temple of White Marble currently located in the Parisian suburb of Neuilly on the Île de la Grande-Jatte.

To commemorate his creation, Carmontelle published a sumptuous folio (*Jardin de Monceau, près de Paris, appartenant à son altesse sérénissime Monseigneur le Duc de Chartres, 1779*), describing his design intentions in a short text and vivifying the garden in seventeen engraved illustrations. The folio, a collector's item of great beauty (and value), is one of the landmarks of eighteenth-century French Picturesque garden

Citoyenne Henri accompanies Garnerin on a highly publicized and controversial flight on July 8, 1798.



theory. In it Carmontelle laid out his humorous, if not disingenuous, approach to Picturesque gardening. For instance, a rural estate was a staple of bourgeois privilege, but in his text he ridiculed the idea that society ladies would find joy in country living, where mud and insects were the norm.

Garden design in the Picturesque idiom exhibited wide stylistic variability, oscillating between the polarities of nature and artifice. At one extreme were pared-down landscapes, devoid of any evidence of human intervention (think of a Capability Brown vista of rolling hills, trees, and lawns to infinity); at the other, grounds filled chockablock with *fabriques* (garden structures), sculpture, monuments, ornamental flower beds, and the like. Carmontelle's Monceau, however, fell decidedly at the latter extreme. In its day it was compared to Stowe because of the number of structures it contained. But Monceau was tiny in comparison, initially about thirty acres compared to Stowe's almost four hundred. As a result, the *fabriques* were cheek by jowl, creating a chaotic visual field. The noted contemporaneous Scottish garden designer and diarist Thomas Blaikie called Monceau a “confusion of many things

joined together without any great natural plan,” and therefore lacking both taste and reason. Jean-Marie Morel – the French counterpart of Capability Brown – was even more blunt in his ridicule of its incoherence.

As a manifestation of fashion – and Carmontelle's Monceau must be seen as such – it was subject to the whims of the time. In 1781 the duc de Chartres called in Blaikie to correct and modify the perceived errors of taste in the design. The Scottish gardener simplified Carmontelle's hodgepodge of redundant pathways by reducing their gratuitous sinuosity, eliminated excessive exotic plantations, consolidated lawns, and otherwise tempered the park's exuberant frivolity. The duke's acquisition of new acreage to the north also enabled Blaikie to create a greater sense of spaciousness; the renovated Monceau extended to a barrier wall, then recently constructed for tax-collection purposes, which at that time defined the limits of the city of Paris. Claude-Nicolas Ledoux's gateway pavilion, a colonnaded rotunda, marked the entrance on the garden's northern flank. Built in 1787, it still stands on the boulevard de Courcelles and serves as a public restroom.

On the eve of the Revolution, Blaikie's transformation of Monceau was complete, but the duc de Chartres – by now duc d'Orléans – did not enjoy his estate long. At his death in 1793, Monceau was seized and nationalized. France's next few decades were tumultuous ones as it reeled in the aftermath of the Revolution, saw the rise and fall of Napoleon, and descended into war and bankruptcy before settling back into old habits with the Restoration in 1814. During these years the garden was by turns abandoned and neglected, put up for sale without success, threatened with development, used as a plant nursery, and leased for outdoor entertainment (dance, music, and other attractions). Among the most popular events in its history were ascents in the hot-air balloons invented by the Mongolfier brothers in 1783. The park also saw the successful demonstration of a parachute descent by André-Jacques Garnerin in 1797 – an all-but-forgotten landmark in Monceau's history. Garnerin's jump, from a *mongolfière* at some eighteen hundred feet, far exceeded the first demonstration of the device by its inventor, Louis-Sébastien Lenormand, who had jumped from the Montpellier observatory in 1783.

With the Restoration, the Bourbons were returned to the throne, and Monceau was repatriated to the Orléans family. Louis XVI's younger brothers, Louis XVIII and Charles X, successively reigned as monarchs, only to have the

Parc Monceau, Naumachia
Colonnade, an original feature of
Carmontelle's *Jardin de Monceau*.
Photograph by Guillaume Jacquet.

Bourbon line end in the so-named “July Revolution of 1830.” Louis-Philippe II, duc d’Orléans, son of the late Philippe-Égalité, was crowned “King of the French State,” thus raising the house of Orléans to the throne.

In accordance with one of the hallmarks of aristocratic privilege, the House of Orléans faced frequent financial collapse. Louis-Philippe and his sister, Adélaïde d’Orléans, had inherited the debts of their father along with joint ownership of

his Jardin de Monceau. Due to Louis’s preference for other royal properties and the expense of maintaining the garden, Monceau was little used. In the mid-1820s several real-estate transactions to sell and divide the property were initiated but never executed. In 1826, one such plan was far enough advanced that a sales prospectus was issued by the developer Jean-Joseph Rougevin, proposing a near-complete division of Monceau into building lots. Fortunately, for complex reasons involving the overlap of the king’s personal affairs with those of the state, the garden remained more or less intact until Louis-Philippe abdicated in 1848.

Shortly after the former monarch’s death in 1850, the French state began to settle scores. Louis-Philippe had given his half-ownership of the garden to his children when he succeeded to the throne to avoid having the state assume his property. In 1852 the French government forced Louis’s children into joint ownership, which continued until 1860, when the Orléans siblings sold their share to the state. The modernization of Paris under the influential prefect Georges-Eugène, Baron Haussmann, was underway, and the Jardin de Monceau of Carmontelle and Blaikie would not survive it.

For close to eighty years, Monceau had been a verdant green space within an increasingly congested Paris. Unsurprisingly, its forty-five acres were now viewed as prime real estate; between 1825 and 1857, their value more than tripled.



After the state obtained full ownership, Haussmann was quick to move. In 1860 half of the acreage was sold to the banker Émile Péreire for development. The other half was retained for what would become Parc Monceau.

The park we know today is primarily the design of Haussmann’s preferred urban engineer, Jean-Charles Adolphe Alphand, and the landscape architect Jean-Pierre Barillet-Deschamps. Alphand’s masterful compilation, *The Promenades of Paris (Les Promenades de Paris)*, a veritable manifesto of the Second Empire Parisian park system, presented in design and in detail Haussmann’s vision of the Paris street- and parkscape. Parc Monceau, which epitomized this aesthetic, became the focal point of the bourgeois neighborhood Péreire developed around it.

Alphand and Barillet-Deschamps utterly changed the park’s design. Very little of the original *jardin* remained untouched, the rare relics being the naumachia, with its colonnade; the pyramid; and Ledoux’s rotunda. Whereas Carmontelle’s Monceau was an intimate and cluttered space of private privilege, Alphand’s – true to the title of his book – became a locus of public promenades by the rising bourgeoisie. The design – preserved today – is structured around two

broad axes, north–south and east–west, and a circumambulating path. Within the quadrants so defined are lawns, floral displays, sculptural features, and smaller paths for less ostentatious strolls. Gabriel Davioud designed a Chinese bridge and altered Ledoux’s tax pavilion by adding a dome and fluting the smooth Doric columns of the original structure. In keeping with the prevailing taste in Picturesque parks, an artificial grotto garnished with stalactites and stalagmites was constructed.

Perhaps the park’s most stunning new features were the gilded fence and gates designed by Davioud. Carrying the arms of Napoleon III and the City of Paris, they are strikingly grand – even regal – for a public park. In fact, the price was as extravagant as the visual effect: the fence and gates consumed almost half the cost of the entire park’s transformation.

Like the fence, the park itself – filled with exotic and garish plantations of fuchsias, begonias, and bananas – was overstated, but in keeping with the aspirations of Péreire’s development. The Monceau area, initially slow to gain popularity, became one of the most desirable and expensive residential neighborhoods in Paris within a decade of the park’s construction. To insure peace and tranquility for prospective buyers of the expensive lots overlooking Monceau, food concessions and entertainment (dance, theatre, and music) were barred from the park by the city.

Many of the grand homes surrounding the park were built by bankers and industrialists, including the Rothschilds, Abraham de Camondo, and Émile-Justin Menier, the chocolate manufacturer. The politician and economist Henri Cernuschi erected a mansion adjacent to the park to house his extensive Asian art collection. He bequeathed both to the City of Paris. The Musée Cernuschi, which opened in 1898, is a small gem within a city known for its museums. It houses one of the most important collections of Asian art in the world.

By the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Paris’ Parc Monceau had become a celebrated venue, inspiring writers like Émile Zola and painters like Claude Monet and Gustave Caillebotte. Whereas the Impressionists’ painterly depictions of Monceau are open to interpretation, Zola, in his novel *The Kill (La Curée)*, uses Monceau as a metaphor for the evils of modernity. The title does not refer to an action, but to a quarry – the remains of the fox after the hounds have gotten to it. A scathing depiction of the nouveau riche, *The Kill* features greed, speculation, opulence, and – for good measure – incest. Nonetheless, Zola himself loved Monceau and immortalized it in another artistic media not generally associated with him: photography.

In time the neighborhood surrounding the park became known less for its super-rich inhabitants than for the artists, writers, and musicians who began to move in. The composers Charles Gounod and Ambroise Thomas lived nearby, as did the writer Henri-René-Albert-Guy de Maupassant. Each is memorialized by a sculpture in the park, as are the composer Frederick Chopin and the dramatist and poet Édouard Pailleron. Equally notable is the larger-than-life-size bronze, *Wounded Lioness*, by wildlife sculptor Charles Valton.

Parc Monceau has changed remarkably little since Zola's day, retaining its air of bourgeois comfort and favor. The east–west axis, the allée de la Comtesse de Ségur, links two fashionable boulevards: avenue Velasquez on the east and avenue Hoche on the west. The north–south axis begins at avenue Ruysdaël on the south and terminates at Ledoux's Rotonda on the boulevard de Courcelles, which also is the park's northern boundary. These streets from the Haussmann era epitomize nineteenth-century Paris and serve as funnels, as it were, for the well-heeled locals to access their neighborhood park.

If the Parc Monceau has become more *populaire* (of the people), it has not lost its near-flawless mien. Few cities have the determined park maintenance of Paris. Smoking is permitted in the park, but on a recent visit not a cigarette butt was to be seen. Nor did I spot a dead tree limb or a dying shrub. The earth in the flower beds was newly tilled and no bench slats were wanting. Even if the lawns were just slightly less impeccably kept than in my memory, the gravel paths a bit rutted from rain, and floral displays a tad more native (no doubt a concession to current horticultural practice), the overall aspect of the park was, remarkably, much as I had remembered it from years past.

No vegetation remains from the eighteenth-century *jardin*, yet a holdout from a bit later still survives: a *Platanus orientalis* (oriental plane tree) dates from 1814. This tree is remarkable not only

for its age but for its stature. Large, powerful, and gnarled, yet miraculously healthy, it appears ready to live another two hundred years. It is not excessively fanciful to speculate that Napoleon himself may have ordered this tree planted, since he once owned the Jardin de Monceau. Other noteworthy *Platanus* trees adorn the grounds, along with Parisian work-horse species such as *Aesculus hippocastanum* (horse chestnut), and *Tilia cordata* (littleleaf linden). Splendid specimens of Turkey oaks, cut leaf beeches, willows, and ornamental shrubs are also noteworthy.

The broad allées are still promenade grounds. Any given day will reveal a sampling of “characteristic” Parisians: sophisticated, fashionable, expensively dressed. And it's not only the adults. Years ago, a large sandbox held pride of place on the allée de la Comtesse de Ségur. Smack in the middle of the main circulation corridor of the park, it was impossible to miss or avoid, as much a performance space as a playground. These children were not dressed down for the messy fun; their shoes were leather, their clothes well-tailored, and their hair carefully combed. You couldn't help but sense that they would go on to the Grandes Écoles (the most renowned and competitive colleges) and become part of the ruling elite of France.

Today the sandbox is gone from the allée, and children gather in a designated playground in the northwest quadrant of the park. Lawns, formerly *interdites* (forbidden) to all but mothers with children (and even then only in designated areas), are now accessible. Sneakers have replaced leather shoes; many men wear shorts; and some women are veiled. To be sure, promenading is still popular, as is reading or daydreaming on a park bench. But the main activity seems to be jogging, which is, after all, another form of social display. Yesterday's solitary exhibitionist has given way to today's communal spectacle. Hundreds of runners circle the park, making the circuit in five to seven minutes. Orderly and well behaved and advancing at a graceful pace, they all move in the same counter-clockwise direction. Remarkably, there are no unpleasant encounters with those just out for a stroll, nor is much fatigue or exertion apparent. They expend enough energy for propulsion, but not enough to break a sweat. Befitting the place and its history, the city and its culture, it is all so very civilized. – Joseph Disponzio

Josephine and the Birth of the Imperial Picturesque

During the tumultuous forty years between 1774 and 1814, when France was transformed from a monarchy into an empire, Marie-Antoinette, queen (r. 1774–93), and Rose-Josephine Tascher de la Pagerie, wife of the First Consul and then empress (r. 1804–1809), created two Picturesque gardens: the Petit Trianon and Malmaison, respectively. The fame of these celebrity patronesses has encouraged gendered interpretations of their gardens as sites of female luxury where both women pursued personal pleasures without any financial constraints. When visiting the gardens today, restorations of the paths and flower beds encourage tourists to imagine that they are following in the footsteps of the former owners. After completing the circuit walk, one exits through the boutiques, where the souvenirs for sale – notably soaps and perfumes – further perpetuate the notion that the gardens were singularly dedicated to sensual delights.

Reconsidering the relationship between these two women from the perspective of female garden patronage suggests a more nuanced dialogue. Historical events, nostalgia, and tourism have promoted the view that both women were disengaged from political discourse. In fact, garden patronage, with its venerable association of fertility and abundance, enabled them to legitimize their roles as consorts who nurtured the gardens of state. By encouraging the acclimatization of trees, shrubs, flowers, and fruits imported from the colonies, they contributed to the horticultural stewardship of royal and imperial France. The metaphor of the fertile garden was not enough to sustain the status of either patroness: Marie-Antoinette was guillotined in 1793, and Napoleon repudiated Josephine in 1809. Nonetheless, examining how both women attempted to link their patronage to the emerging sense of nationhood enhances our understanding of female agency in the dissemination of the Picturesque garden style in the first decades of the nineteenth century.

Since the Renaissance, garden patronage empowered royal consorts to exploit the conceits of fecundity and abundance to enhance their status at court. For French queens, whose role was primarily to procreate, a royal garden was a landscape that complemented or substituted for female fertility. Marie-Antoinette's decision to become a garden patroness was not exceptional but rather reflected a customary mode of royal self-fashioning. When Louis XVI granted his queen control over access to the Petit Trianon in 1774, they had been married for four years without producing a child. Hence the



Parc Monceau, wrought-iron entrance gate, mid-1860s, Gabriel Davioud. Photograph by the author.

royal gift of usufruct substituted symbolically for the gift of motherhood until the births of their daughter in 1778 and their long-awaited son in 1781 – the latter after almost eleven years of marriage. Clearly the queen, as the director of the Maison de la Reine, hoped that garden patronage, coupled with royalist propaganda emanating from the Maison du Roi, would deflect from her alleged sterility.

During the reigns of Louis XIV and Louis XV, the Petit Trianon had been an eminent site for botanical experimentation and exchange. In the second half of the eighteenth century, the ever-growing number of specimens in the royal gardens testified to colonial expansion and symbolized the richness of French maritime trade. Contrary to popular opinion, Marie-Antoinette continued to endorse botanical acclimatization when she decided to create a Picturesque garden at the Petit Trianon. Over 4,000 rare species from Louis XV's gardens were transferred to the Jardin du Roi, but the queen's gardeners also imported new species of trees, including varieties from America and Canada. Gabriela Lamy's study of Pierre-Joseph Buc'hoz, who published an illustrated volume documenting the garden at the Petit Trianon entitled *The Garden of Eden, or the terrestrial paradise reinvented in the Queen's garden at the Trianon* (1783-85), amply documents the queen's support for botanical sci-

ences. Although the scientific community did not warmly receive Buc'hoz's work – he attempted to reclassify various specimens to honor the queen and her courtiers – Marie-Antoinette recognized the importance of encouraging scientific illustration. Later she commissioned the flower painter Pierre Joseph Redouté, who had arrived in Paris in 1782, to document the flowers that grew under her supervision.

When she became queen in 1774, Marie-Antoinette began her grand garden project by instructing her architect, Richard Micque – supported by the *botaniste-fleuriste* Claude Richard and his son Antoine – to design a fashionable *jardin champêtre*.

Micque's design was not spatially innovative, but rather imitative of the Picturesque style popular amongst aristocratic patrons since the early 1770s. Jacques-Ange Gabriel's preexisting pavilion, the Petit Trianon, was integrated into the landscape. From it, the queen and her entourage strolled along a serpentine circuit walk where they encountered archetypes of Picturesque decoration: a *rocher*, a rusticated bridge that crossed over a cascade, a belvedere, a grotto, and a temple of love. There was also a pond, and a water circuit. The queen was interested in flowers not only for their blossoms but also for their scents; lilies, hyacinths, anemones, narcissus, carnations, and violets were all intensely cultivated.

The Hameau, an ornamental farm, was added later, between 1783 and 1787. Its eleven buildings, whose rustic facades recalled vernacular Norman architecture, were scenographically arranged around an artificial lake suitable for boat rides and filled with fish. Kitchen gardens adjoined the buildings and were planted with artichokes and cabbages. An array of blooms, notably hyacinths and geraniums, were planted in ornamental flower gardens enclosed by small box hedges. To expand the productivity of the farm, which included two dairies, the queen had fields of cereal crops planted (barley, oats, and buckwheat) to the north of the Hameau, as well as alfalfa, clover, and flax for the cows and goats supplying the dairy with fresh milk. After her children were born, Marie-Antoinette frequently retreated to the Hameau with them, following the fashionable educational precepts of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. In so doing, however, she was also underscoring her fecundity and the fact that she perpetuated the Bourbon line.

In addition, Marie-Antoinette had adopted the rose as a reference to her family's heraldry; the planting of roses at the Petit Trianon implied that the Hapsburg Rose could bring an eternal spring to France. Approximately eighty-seven varieties of roses were known in France in the 1780s, and several hybrids (Gallicas, eglantines, dog roses [*Rosa canina*], and *Rosa centifolia*) were displayed at both the Petit Trianon and the Hameau. The queen also awarded Redouté with the official position as Dessinateur de la Reine in order that he might make botanical drawings documenting her flowers.

The queen's projected image as a naturalized Hapsburg rose protecting the seigniorial stewardship of France did not align with competing and far less flattering percep-

tions: that she was a foreigner (referred to derogatorily as the *Autrichienne*), that she was alienated from the King, and that she privileged private pleasures over the concerns of state. Although Marie-Antoinette may have thought that she was endorsing the prosperity of the realm, her imposition of restricted access to the Trianon implied that it was a secretive retreat where female authority usurped male rule. The queen's ornamental farm also upended the paternalistic image derived from Virgil's *Georgics* of male control of the landscape, farms, and property. Consequently, the queen's domain came to be seen as a highly contested site of political intrigue.

Was the queen's garden the creation of a dedicated consort, or was she disconnected from social and political realities? These two visions of Marie-Antoinette's garden patronage can be better reconciled when reconsidered within the frameworks of *ancien régime* sociability and female empowerment. Marie-Antoinette's patronage transformed the Petit Trianon into a modern domain, following the precepts of contemporary garden theorists. She used her garden as a means of endorsing colonial policies, encouraging the documentation of rare species, advocating agrarian reform, and promoting floriculture in the decorative arts, porcelains, and textiles. As Mary Sheriff has suggested in *The Exceptional Woman: Elisabeth Vigée-Lebrun and the Cultural Politics of Art*, Marie-Antoinette was and continues to be recognized as an exceptional patron, “a powerful woman descended from an even more powerful mother.”

While both historical readings of the queen's patronage are viable, the interpretation of her legacy merits further consideration. Certainly the queen's accomplishments would have been well known to Josephine in the 1780s, when she was still Madame Beauharnais and intimately familiar with *ancien régime* sociability modeled on royal etiquette.

When Josephine and the future Napoleon I bought Malmaison in 1799, the Petit Trianon was in ruins; and yet, despite the desacralization of Versailles, the fallen queen's role as a patroness had not been completely eclipsed. In the ten years after her death, Marie-Antoinette's patronage was in fact admired by those members of the emerging aristocracy who were nostalgic for *ancien régime* values. Charged with forming a Consular court society, Josephine adapted the queen's successes – botanical acclimatization and illustration, farming, and floriculture – to a new and more “objective” scientific mission that glorified the emerging nation-state.

Josephine had many reasons to fuse her identity with her property and become a horticultural patroness. Born to a

Marie-Antoinette with the Rose, by Élisabeth Louise Vigée Le Brun, oil on canvas, 1783.



noble family on a struggling plantation in Martinique, she understood the vicissitudes of agricultural development and maritime trade. She was also a recently remarried widow; her joint residence at Malmaison with her ambitious husband offered the promise of stability and growth. Both Josephine and Napoleon, aware of the potential dangers of symbolic association with the *ancien régime*, envisioned Malmaison as a paradigm for post-Revolutionary bourgeois land owners that would inspire agronomic and horticultural renewal. Furthermore, after 1802 Napoleon granted émigrés the right to return to France and claim their former properties. For the First Consul and Josephine, Malmaison therefore served not only as an example for a new generation of leaders but also for those desiring to reclaim their estates and establish good relations with the Consular government.

In 1799 Malmaison was a modest property that included a park of approximately 105 acres. Even before Josephine acquired it, the prior owners had begun to update the formal gardens in accordance with fashionable Picturesque precepts. Josephine went through several landscape architects before Louis-Martin Berthault devised a plan that suited her desires. It incorporated serpentine paths, a winding river, an artificial pond for boat rides, and framed views that gave the illusion that the property was more extensive than it was. Josephine then selected sculptures and architectural fragments from the former royal collections, which Berthault arranged strategically in the park.

Along the banks of the river, flowering shrubs were planted against backdrops of weeping willows, maples, Indian chestnuts, and cypresses. Mimosas, a variety of peonies, a rare magnolia, and a profusion of rhododendrons were interspersed among native species, signaling Josephine's growing interest in horticultural diversity. In fact, from the outset, Josephine made sure that the scientific aspects of her enterprise were emphasized; her newly-commissioned greenhouse (50 meters long) rivaled the greenhouses at the recently renamed Jardin des Plantes, and she built smaller conservatories and an orangery to display her collections.

The empress distanced herself from Marie-Antoinette's example by opening her gardens to a wide public and sharing her botanical experiments and acquisitions with the scientific community at the Musée national d'histoire naturelle. By March 1802, over two thousand plants, trees, and shrubs had been delivered to Malmaison and could be admired in



An Allegory of Empress Josephine as Patroness of the Gardens at Malmaison, by baron François Gérard, watercolor and pen and black ink, c. 1805. Note the greenhouses in the background. Collection: Metropolitan Museum of Art.

even during the Continental blockade.

Like Marie-Antoinette, Josephine adopted the rose as a potent symbol – almost a personification. Napoleon had famously requested that she renounce her common

name – Rose – when they married, so it was not surprising that the rose became her signature flower. At Malmaison Josephine decided to collect all the known varieties of roses, including exotic species from Asia that were new to France. Originally they were not planted in a specific space (today's rose garden is a modern construction); instead, rose bushes were dispersed throughout the park. Some were planted to supply bouquets, but the majority were placed in greenhouses and displayed when they bloomed in May and June.

To record her plant collection for posterity, Josephine recruited Abbé Étienne Ventenat, whose *Jardin de la Malmaison* (1803–1804) was illustrated with 120 plates by Redouté. In his introduction, Ventenat deftly alluded to the question of Josephine's fecundity when he wrote, "You believed that the taste for flowers should not be a sterile study," and then linked Josephine's passion for plants to Napoleonic conquests:

You have gathered around you the rarest plants growing on French soil. Some, indeed, which never before left the deserts of Arabia or the burning sands of Egypt have been domesticated through your care. Now, regularly classified, they offer to us as we inspect them in the beautiful gardens of Malmaison an impressive reminder of the conquests of your illustrious husband.

By commissioning Redouté to record new species, the empress also effectively reinstated the honorific position of Dessinateur de la Reine. Significantly, Buc'hoz had appealed to Napoleon to sponsor his botanical illustrations and been denied; Josephine designated her own experts, not the emperor.

Napoleon supported Josephine's garden patronage to validate his own geopolitical ambitions, and both husband and wife seized upon the garden to promote horticulture in France. Even as her separation from the emperor became inevitable, Josephine continued to assert her desire to disseminate new plants: In March 1809 she wrote: "It makes me quite happy to see plants from abroad flourish in my garden. I hope that Malmaison soon will be a rich resource for all the departments . . . I am having innumerable trees and shrubs from the southern hemisphere and North America grown

the greenhouses or along the promenade. Sometimes these additions had political implications, such as when Josephine planted a cedar in 1800 to commemorate Napoleon's victory against Austrian forces in Italy. Marie-Antoinette had planted a cedar at the Petit Trianon in the 1780s, but Josephine separated herself from the royal precedent by naming it the Cedar of Marengo in reference to the eponymous battle. The tree continues to grow at Malmaison today. For Josephine Malmaison would become a laboratory for the natural sciences, a scientifically sanctioned Empire of Flora, where she celebrated the fruits of Napoleon's victories in a rejuvenated garden of France.

Josephine had had two children by her previous husband, Alexandre de Beauharnais: Eugène, whom Napoleon adopted but barred from succession, and Hortense, who married the emperor's brother in 1802. But Josephine was unable to produce a child in her marriage to Napoleon. After she was crowned empress in 1804 at the age of forty-one, the question of an heir to the throne became a critical political issue. In much the way that Marie-Antoinette had used the gardens at the Petit Trianon, Josephine exploited Malmaison to displace fears about procreation by publicly showcasing her fertile property. She expanded her ornamental farm to accommodate an extensive sheepfold. She requisitioned sculptural friezes from the dairy built for Marie-Antoinette at the Château de Rambouillet and planned to have them installed in her own dairy. She aggressively supported horticultural expeditions and assured the delivery of seeds to her greenhouses

here. I should like every department in ten years' time to possess a collection of valuable plants from my nurseries."

When Napoleon annexed the Grand and Petit Trianon to the Imperial domain in 1804, and Josephine was poised to become titular owner of Marie-Antoinette's estate, much of the garden was in ruins. The defunct queen's collection of rare trees, with notable examples from America and Canada, had been sent to the newly established Musée nationale d'histoire naturelle in the 1790s; the garden's architecture was dilapidated; and the grounds, especially at the Hameau, had been divided into lots and sold to new owners – a lemonade seller among them. Did Josephine imagine occupying the Petit Trianon? Certainly she visited Versailles after the annexation, yet work to restore the buildings and grounds did not begin until 1806. By this point concern about her fertility had become a matter of both private and public debate. Three years later, desperate for an heir, Napoleon divorced Josephine and remarried almost immediately, choosing Marie-Antoinette's young niece Marie Louise in the hopes of cementing his recent alliance with Austria.

The refurbishment of the Petit Trianon accelerated. By April 1810 the *jardin anglais* and Hameau had been replanted, the *fabriques* restored, and Napoleon's new bride installed at the Petit Trianon, where she redecorated the bedrooms in Gabriel's pavilion. Napoleon reconstructed a carousel, or *jeu de bague*, modeled on Marie-Antoinette's carousel. He redecorated one of the dairies too, stressing its role in supplying milk for Marie Louise and his new son, the King of Rome. Although Marie Louise's uncle apparently saluted his niece's "courage" at returning to the former royal residence, the young empress seems to have enjoyed the gardens, appreciating a retreat that glorified her aunt.

In August 1811 a festival was held at the Petit Trianon to celebrate both Napoleon's marriage and the birth of his heir. Marie Louise commissioned a play, *Le Jardinier de Schoenbrunn*, to be performed in the theater Marie-Antoinette had had built, presumably to celebrate the Franco-Austrian alliance. Following the performance, the imperial couple strolled to the Temple of Love, which was fully illuminated. There, serenaded by musicians, they received members of the court.

The restoration of the gardens at the Petit Trianon and the imperial festivities held there may have consecrated nostalgia for the defunct queen, but they did not herald the dawning of a prosperous new era of Empire, as Napoleon had envisioned. Within three years, the emperor was in exile and Marie Louise had returned to Austria with their son. After the Bourbons' return to power in France, the recently

restored Petit Trianon was seen not as a symbol of Napoleon's power but instead as a memorial to the queen. In the succeeding decades, its Picturesque style was infused with a spirit of Romanticism; by the second half of the nineteenth century, Marie-Antoinette's garden had become almost a fetish.

As Napoleon and Josephine had foreseen at the start of the Consular period, the Picturesque landscape became a sign of a rejuvenated aristocracy, one that endorsed agronomic and horticultural reforms. Alexandre de Laborde's *Description des nouveaux jardins de la France et de ses anciens châteaux* (1803–15), demonstrates that the Picturesque style was well established on both former aristocratic estates and new garden sites by the end of the First Empire. But when Josephine died in 1814, Malmaison – intended to be the model for the Imperial Picturesque – was abandoned.

Despite the decline of the garden, Josephine's horticultural reputation survived because of her patronage of botanical illustration. Redouté continued to serve his patron after her divorce, and his three-volume opus, *Roses* (1817–24), published after Josephine's death, provides precious documentation of her collection, even if it records only a percentage of the species that blossomed under her care – approximately 167 of what may have been over 500 (including gallicas, Centifolias, China and damask roses, Albas, Spinossissimas, Lutea, *Rosa moschata*, *Rosa carolina*, and *Rosa setigera*). The empress's patronage of Redouté insured both of their reputations. Significantly, the record of Josephine's collection also inspired the next generation of female gardeners to cultivate hybrid roses that were first grown at Malmaison.

The gardens at Malmaison were restored when Josephine's grandson Napoleon III – who remembered tasting sugarcane as a child at his grandmother's conservatory – bought the estate in 1864. Although garden historians have attributed his desire to create public parks in Paris to examples he saw during his exile in London, it is possible that he looked to Malmaison as well: a First Empire garden that embodied the Bonaparte legacy. Through its influence on the emperor, Malmaison, with its legacy of the Picturesque, may have contributed to the evolution of the French public-park movement.

More than two hundred years after their deaths, Josephine and Marie-Antoinette are indelibly linked to their gardens – gardens whose beauty is far more tangible to many visitors than the issues of fertility and sovereignty that informed their creation. But the political, social, and stylistic connections between the Petit Trianon and Malmaison remind us of the complexities of female garden patronage and enrich our understanding of gardens as living history.

– Susan Taylor-Leduc

Precursor to the French Picturesque?

Pondering the Meaning of Painshill

Fashion always needs a leader, but it is not always obvious, even in retrospect, who led whom. When there is a momentous change, such as the destruction of countless formal gardens to make way for the style ever since associated with Capability Brown, the enquiry seems more urgent. Perhaps by the first decades of the eighteenth century, the symmetry that had dominated garden design for so long had started to seem unambitious. It is not easy to plumb the psyches of privileged young men: competition is only natural; vanity very likely; a strain of poetry certainly possible; and, among the curious, a desire to learn and experiment highly probable.

England had always been avid to follow Italian and French fashions. This was more true than ever when King Charles II, restored to the throne in 1660 after years of exile at the French court, made everything French the rage – including the structural magnificence of Le Nôtre's gardens. And straight lines and symmetry were already inbred: the naïveté of earlier English gardens rarely envisaged anything else. Curves in a knot garden, naturally; but certainly not the wandering lines that were soon to define English gardening. Some critics argue that the new gardens were simply a reaction to the excesses of formality. Alexander Pope and Joseph Addison enjoyed poking fun at extravagances of artificiality – topiary in particular.

Who gave permission to jettison the long tradition of rigidity? The mysterious term "sharawadgi" was bandied about in England at the end of the seventeenth century as representing either the Chinese or Japanese style of free-form gardening; credit has been given to Dutch merchants for importing tales of such gardens, as well as items depicting them, from their trading posts in the Far East. It took several decades, however, for landowners, who cherished their stately walks in the old style, to embrace the new. In the 1730s, Stowe represented the first grand-scale commitment to free-form, curvaceous, "naturalistic" landscaping embellished with temples, bridges, and pavilions. It was here that the fashionable designer of the day, the versatile William Kent, declared that "all nature was a garden."

The question of who precisely was responsible for the evolution of the show gardens of the time has kept many an essayist harmlessly occupied. Successive kings and queens and their appointees were certainly as influential as anyone.

The royal gardener Charles Bridgeman anticipated Kent, and the Princess of Wales commissioned the architect William Chambers to build a number of fanciful buildings at Kew, including the Chinese pagoda that still stands today. But it was open season for the amateur, too. It was de rigueur for young noblemen and gentlemen of fortune to finish their education on the Grand Tour, which usually culminated in Rome or Naples. Looting Italian collections of art and antiquities for their own houses and gardens was par for the course (as was being gulled by Italian antique dealers).

Charles Hamilton, the ninth son of the sixth Earl of Abercorn, was just such an amateur. Born in Dublin and educated at Oxford, he went on two Grand Tours: the first in 1725, the second in 1732. Six years later, he started acquiring land at Painshill in Surrey, just south of London. Painshill was one of the earliest parks to break away from the formal conventions, featuring numerous “prospects” and follies. For the ambitious landowner in the mid-eighteenth century, there was an unprecedented flood of new things to plant, particularly from America, and Hamilton ordered many trees and shrubs from Pennsylvanian naturalist John Bartram.

It would have been a dull landowner, you might think, who would not have joined in the game of “landskipping” his property and collecting new trees – nor has the game by any means come to an end, even now. The past thirty years in

Britain have seen innumerable new essays in this old pastime as well as one wholly remarkable rediscovery and restoration of an outstanding original: Hamilton’s Painshill.

Painshill provides a unique opportunity to experience what a man of fortune and fashion intended. Little altered by subsequent generations, the estate was almost obliterated by neglect in the last century, and yet sufficient evidence of its owner’s original intent remained to recreate what was put in place 250 years ago. Its contemporaries Stowe, Stourhead, and Rousham are well known and well documented. Painshill has all the impact and allure of the dawning Georgian age seen, as it were, for the first time.

To compare the little with the great, I was in the process of making my own modest landscape garden when I first set eyes on Painshill, long before its restoration. Conditions were not propitious. It was a wet November afternoon. We were staying with the then director general of the Royal Horticultural Society’s garden at Wisley, Christopher Brickell, and his wife, Jeanette, for the weekend. After lunch Chris proposed exploring an abandoned park he had been told about that was only three miles down the road. The lake had been let to a fishing club, he told me. They didn’t like visitors. He and I set off, dressed for the rain, toward the tangled wood that hid the property. We were met with a barbed-wire fence, which we set about negotiating.

There was no sign of a garden or a lake through the thickets of saplings that choked the place. We pressed on downhill (scouts learn that water lies at the bottom of a slope) till we reached a stretch of water. “They say there’s an old grotto somewhere here,” Chris said. A huge cedar grew out of brickwork at the water’s edge – perhaps an old bathhouse, we surmised. Further on we found a wooden bridge, with many of the planks missing, but we could see some rocks at the far end. We had found the

grotto, or what was left of it. Crossing the bridge was hazardous; we had to run on the slippery planks to jump the gaps. But the rocks were extraordinary: jagged, lumpy, spongelike outcrops emerging from the undergrowth.

When we clambered in, it was evident that the grotto had largely collapsed. Through a jagged opening, we glimpsed what seemed to be a small canal, but our path was blocked. The place seemed threatening, and it was growing dark. Still, as we retreated, my head was full of ideas. What our new garden needed was water and rocks.

It was forty years before I returned to Painshill. I suppose I guarded the strange memory as something private. Meanwhile I was busy, sometimes almost obsessed, with my own little project: aping Georgian intentions on a miniature scale. Could I create a landscape garden, with its progression from project to project, monument to monument, on a plot less than one-tenth of the typical size? While I attempted to answer that question, Charles Hamilton’s former estate was being elaborately and painstakingly restored.

It was a glorious winter day when I saw Painshill again. The brilliant sun low in the blue sky gave the scene a surreal clarity and precision. The lake was sapphire, the trees filigree, and the stonework white. Everything became clear at once: the lake unrippled, reflecting every detail, was a mirror filling a winding valley of immaculate green. I hoped its creator was looking down to see his walks well brushed and his follies in perfect order.

Today Hamilton’s intentions are palpable as he shepherds you across a meadow into the woods that conceal his ruined fragment of an abbey; through his vineyard tilted above the lake; across his broad lawn fringed with evergreens; and into a narrow alley to face his Gothic belvedere.

Hamilton is playing peekaboo, the old game of conceal and reveal, a staple of garden design, which the Japanese use to great effect. His belvedere reveals what you had half expected: a long serpent of water between lawns and woods, a black cedar of Lebanon rising above, and, crouching below, a classical, five-arched bridge across the water. On the next eminence is a strange Oriental tent. Still concealed are a mausoleum formed as a ruined Roman arch, a hermitage, a tall Gothic watchtower, an iron waterwheel that supplies the lake and its cascade, a six-columned Doric temple (being rebuilt as I write) and, lying at the heart of the design, the grotto.

On the day of my visit, Hamilton’s grotto was a cave of ice. There was a skim of ice on the lake reflecting the gold light of afternoon, which was so low-angled that the stalactites glittered and twinkled. After years of restoration, the roof is rebuilt and the interior lined again with the glittering slivers



Grotto, Painshill.

of feldspar and quartz and crystal that almost bankrupted the dreamer who made it. Never did a folly seem less foolish.

What possesses a man to strew the countryside with such a bazaar of curiosities? What do they represent in his mind – beside a great deal of his fortune? Are they a display of his erudition? His taste for the historic and exotic? What the French graphically call *la folie de la pierre* grips builders everywhere. Where earlier generations kept their curiosities in a cabinet, the fashionable Englishman modeled his ideal landscape and turned it into a museum. In his essay “On Modern Gardening,” Horace Walpole remarked, “Prospect, animated prospect, is the theatre that will always be the most frequented.” He also noted the limits of this new form of display: “The more we exact novelty, the sooner our taste will be vitiated.”

This style of free-form gardening, with all its potential for individual fancies, was widely accepted by 1750. Whatever the label – “English,” “landscape,” or, in France, usually *anglo-chinois* – it was seen to embody liberal ideas in general: political, religious, philosophical, and scientific. It brought fashionable nature into play; it was like playing at painting.

There is a catalogue of reasons why the natural style was born in England and why England is where it flourished almost to the exclusion of all alternatives. The English nobility and gentry lived on their country estates – unlike the French, who were obliged to stay close to the court in Paris or Versailles. They were passionately attached to their land: its productivity, its particular attributes, its field sports (and its rents). Their favourite prospect was the view from their windows, and like all Britons they spent every hour possible outdoors: hunting, shooting, fishing, or picnicking. Despite its reputation, the English climate was on their side; extremes are rare, and the frequent rain keeps the grass green and the streams full. If the English country house is considered the country’s greatest contribution to the arts, so is its setting.

The man who commercialized what Hamilton and his contemporaries had invented was, of course, “Capability” Brown. It was he who gave England its self-image as the country of smooth, green pastures, serpentine lakes, clumps of venerable trees, and hedges eminently suitable for jumping in pursuit of the fox. Those who found his landscapes repetitive and insipid always had the option of building follies (which was seldom Brown’s idea). Indeed, the *folie de la pierre* soon took hold again in the guise of the Picturesque. Walpole was right: the demand for novelty renews itself.

France could never compete on equal terms. The irregular woods so common in England were uncommon in France, where trees were frequently lopped, stripped, or coppiced, and French parks tended to be more modest than their British counterparts, with avenues of immature trees. Moreover, the French nobles clustered around Paris lived on relatively small estates. When they thought of “improving” them, it was often to keep up with fashion. Whatever the “right” proportion of building to landscape may be, cramming too many features into the scenery produces an effect that is far from sublime.

Nor were French aristocrats eager to be seen aping their old enemy. French landowners were therefore happier with the idea that the new style of gardening had originated in China, even if it arrived via England. Horace Walpole, who spent long periods in Paris, explains: “The French have of late years adopted our style in gardens, but choosing to be fundamentally obliged to more remote rivals, they deny us half the merit, or rather the originality of the invention, by ascribing the discovery to the Chinese, and . . . calling our taste in gardening ‘anglo-chinois.’”

The catalogue of features that were at one time deemed *chinois* was impressive. The term embraced classical temples, obelisks, bridges, cascades, miscellaneous ruins, grottoes, chapels, Turkish tents, icehouses, pagodas, pyramids, rotundas, and arcades – any structure as long as it related to a piece of winding water. France had a few grand examples of the landscape garden, such as the 900 hectares of Ermenonville, north of Paris, where Rousseau was eventually buried on the Isle of Poplars, and a few elaborate ones, such as the Parc Monceau, now a much-diminished green space in the heart of Paris. Today, in its most debased form, *le jardin anglais-chinois* is the pond and crooked path in front of a provincial French *mairie*.

It is the infinitely flexible quality of the English landscape garden that guarantees it will never be superseded, whether it is reincarnated as a suburban golf course or New York’s Central Park. Perhaps Walpole was right when he concluded, “We have given the model of true gardening to the world; let other countries mimic or corrupt our taste, but let it reign here on its verdant throne . . . softening nature’s harshness and copying her graceful touch.” – Hugh Johnson

Place Maker

Alexandre de Vogüé, Vaux-le-Vicomte

Having lived in Canada and Patagonia, worked as a professional mountain guide in the Himalayas and Rockies, and married a woman from India’s Punjab, Alexandre de Vogüé is hardly a typical French aristocrat. For many years, he turned away from his family’s ancestral home at Vaux-le-Vicomte, one of the finest estates in France. But now he is back, managing the property with his two brothers and taking on the entrepreneurial role of marketing director. A two-hour tour of the glorious gardens with him convinced me that he has also become Vaux’s most passionate advocate.

Vaux has been in Alexandre’s family for 140 years, since his great-great-grandfather Alfred Sommier saved it from ruin and probable demolition in the 1870s. But its history is much longer. Situated thirty-five miles southeast of Paris, the château was created in the 1650s for Nicolas Fouquet, finance minister to France’s Sun King, Louis XIV. Its gardens were the spectacular first private commission for André Le Nôtre, and its audacious scale and sophisticated patterning inspired not only the king’s subsequent gardens at Versailles but also aristocratic estates throughout Europe. From Vaux spread a style of sumptuous, geometrical, magical garden design that is still seen today as a pinnacle of European culture.

My last visit to Vaux had been six years earlier, when Alexandre’s father, Patrice, had still been in charge. As we walked, his son was keen to point out recent changes. Strikingly, Le Nôtre’s gardens can now be glimpsed as originally intended from the entrance court; great glass doors have been installed in the château’s long-blocked central arches. Work is almost complete on restoring the garden’s sixty-one statues – some from Le Nôtre’s time; some acquired by Sommier. More than 230 linden trees (*Tilia cordata*) have been planted along the banks of the vast canal to replace diseased horse chestnuts. Each tree displays the name of the donor whose support made the planting possible.

These physical changes are significant. So are the new governance arrangements in place for Vaux, which include an executive committee and a management board. At first Alexandre was sceptical of using practices more common to a private company than a family home, but he soon became convinced that clear administrative structures and outside expertise were necessary for the estate to continue to thrive.

The family's passion for Vaux remains as strong as it ever was, but discussions, he explains, are "less emotional" with this formal arrangement. Arguments need to be more clearly articulated and compelling now that people outside the family are involved.

Alexandre is candid about his complex, changing relationship with Vaux. He grew up there, and remembers when his father decided in the late 1960s to open the château to the public. He talks of hiding toys and the TV so that visitors could imagine it still in its seventeenth-century heyday.

Then military service (compulsory in France until recently) took him to the Alps in his late teens. There for the first time he felt free of family responsibilities and found himself reluctant to go home. And so followed his years as a mountaineer and tour guide, living in North and South America. It was only in his forties, having broken his leg, that he became more conscious of the perils of the mountains. He felt, as he described it, "the shadow of Vaux behind me" and decided to return.

His energy and newfound commitment to Vaux are palpable as we stride through the gardens. He tells of his vivid memory of Betsy Barlow Rogers (one of the garden's great supporters and a board member) standing in the dome atop the château and explaining the "three Ps" that he would need to make a success of his role: passion, patience, and perseverance. He has needed those three qualities in abundance. But he is also clear that this is not his life's work. He sees the benefits of fresh eyes and new enthusiasms, and he has said that he will move on after ten years. He tells me that his father ran Vaux for four decades and has found it difficult to let control pass to his sons, whose ideas he sees as new-fangled and sometimes inappropriate for this grand old estate. Later, when we are discussing the adage that stewardship is "a series of painful decisions," Alexandre remarks wistfully



Alexandre de Vogüé.

that the decisions have not been difficult at Vaux, but that the family discussions have definitely been painful. Conversely, he sees one of the great strengths of Vaux is that it has always been a private home, right from its creation in the 1650s. As a result, it has an intimacy and ease quite different from Versailles and the other great royal palaces. He is emphatic that he would not want the family to relinquish its links to Vaux, however difficult its stewardship may be.

One of the reasons that Alexandre returned to Vaux was a change in French law that made it more attractive to donors to support the country's heritage. He feared that his family would not seize the opportunity provided by the new legislation. Through his aunt, who is a fund-raiser in New York, he has developed a network of international supporters and donors who are making possible some impressive restoration projects. The beautiful painted ceiling of the château's *Chambre des Muses* is being painstakingly recreated on-site, funded to the tune of almost half a million dollars by American publisher and collector Alexis Gregory. The project is being marketed as a tourist attraction in its own right, with transparent screens allowing visitors a behind-the-scenes view of the restoration in progress.

Thanks to another American donation, work will start soon on the statue of Hercules at the far end of the gardens. Situated over a mile from the château, the vast statue is to be regilded so that it stands out once more against its green backdrop. Other possible restoration projects had come up during the recent quadricentennial celebrations of Le Nôtre's birth. For instance, someone suggested recreating the two rows of fountains that once ran alongside the central path, which had been described by the author Madeleine de Scudéry (a great friend and supporter of Fouquet) as a "*balustrade de cristal*."

Although enthusiastic about such proposals, Alexandre explains to me soberly that he is working on a long-term plan that will set out the priorities for management and restora-

tion work at Vaux. He sees this as vital – a way to establish a vision for the future and prioritize a set of projects that then can be individually organised and funded. The plan is another idea that has come from his American network and has transformed his whole approach to the management of Vaux.

He is full of views and stories as we walk, but Alexandre still makes time to point to some of his favorite parts of the gardens. We note how carefully Le Nôtre laid out the grounds so that the château is perfectly reflected five hundred yards away in the great square lake known as the *Arpent d'eau* (acre of water). Later we pause to watch the little river Anqueuil tumbling downwards over rocks, a moment of delightful naturalism, before it joins the great canal that Le Nôtre confidently thrust across and (seemingly) beyond the gardens. Further on we come upon a view deliberately framed by Le Nôtre of a medieval bridge outside the site. And when we return to the château, we stop to admire the *parterre de fleurs*, as well as the adjacent terrace that his father rediscovered under a mass of earth in 1980 and restored.

One of Alexandre's great interests is the artistic history of Vaux. Fouquet, the original owner, was a man with exceptional taste: a collector of fine sculptures and paintings as well as a much-loved patron of artists and poets. His treasures were on display at a dazzling fête organised in August 1661 in honour of Louis XIV. Already distrustful of Fouquet, the young king was supposedly driven to fury by the splendour of the château and its magical gardens, and had his finance minister arrested three weeks later for embezzlement. Fouquet never saw Vaux again, dying nineteen years later in prison, and his great collections were gradually dispersed. Statues, fountains, paintings, exotic plants, tapestries, and books were all seized by the king or sold off by Fouquet's family. Alexandre is "amazed" how little academic research has been conducted on these famed collections (and tells how he challenged a rather dismissive archivist at the *École du Louvre* who claimed otherwise). Just as Vaux already holds annual events to celebrate the 1661 fête, the family now has great plans to identify and assemble as many items from Fouquet's collection as possible, for at least a temporary exhibition at Vaux.

It is not just the art collections that would benefit from more research. Alexandre has also established a "scientific

committee” to investigate how the gardens have evolved over time. Until recently, Vaux was presented very much as surviving unchanged from Fouquet’s era, with Le Nôtre’s first, great gardens still intact. And it is true that much of the magical, intimate quality of his design is still perceptible – the grand views, the contemplative moments, the magnificent sculptures, the sound of falling water. But Alexandre is interested in exploring the whole history of the site. He would love to know how far the gardens had been developed, and by whom, before Le Nôtre was commissioned, and thus to understand whether others, perhaps, laid some of the groundwork for the pioneering design. Similarly, he is keen to uncover more about the early nineteenth-century history, when it seems that the gardens were partially converted to an English-style park (as happened to so many great French estates after the Revolution).

Another area for research is the restoration carried out by his ancestor Alfred Sommier after 1875. The gardens had been abandoned in 1847, after the then-owner, Charles de Choiseul-Praslin, murdered his wife and committed suicide in a scandal that shocked and enthralled much of Europe. An art lover and collector, Sommier sought to return the château and its gardens to Fouquet’s original vision. The estate thus provides a fascinating early example of the restoration of a Le Nôtre garden, and one which Alexandre is eager to better understand. Physical signs of Sommier’s interventions remain in the many clipped yew pyramids introduced into the gardens and conserved today – even though they were not part of Le Nôtre’s original design. Similarly, the original *parterres de broderie* at the side and rear of the château (which, a hundred years after Fouquet, had deteriorated into beds for growing potatoes) were laid out in the early twentieth century in exquisite new patterns by Achille Duchêne, the prolific garden designer who, with his father, Henri, rediscovered and reconstructed many French classical gardens.



Alexandre and I share a fascination with Elie Lainé, a little-known French designer, whose role in Sommier’s restoration of the gardens we believe to have been more significant than is currently understood. Alexandre may have large projects and big issues to manage, but he cannot hide his glee when I share new snippets of information about Lainé. After twenty-five years of deliberate distance, he now seems to revel in every detail about Vaux.

There are, however, undoubtedly frustrations for him in learning more about the gardens’ history. Some scholars make reference to important material stored at Vaux, but Alexandre tells me that the section on gardens in the estate’s archives is now completely empty. Sadly, it seems that everything has been dispersed over time, perhaps lent to researchers and not returned. In addition, his father has deliberately shared little about the work that he has undertaken or the information he has gleaned over forty years – for fear, he says, of boring his sons.

Despite his own enthusiasm for more research, Alexandre understands the risk of overburdening visitors with too much information. They need a simple story, told well. He refers to the current exhibition at Vaux, which shows how part of the estate became a hospital during the First World War, and wonders how many of those ancillary stories from Vaux’s rich history you can tell without confusing people.

It is the visitors to his family’s estate who take up much of Alexandre’s attention. Vaux needs four hundred thousand visitors annually just to cover its running costs. Typically,

numbers do not exceed three hundred thousand, and in 2016 did not even reach that figure, as a result of the terrorist attacks in France and the poor summer weather. He explains that you have to be hardheaded to increase Vaux’s draw as a tourist attraction. Only 1 percent of people might be interested in Fouquet and the history of the estate. So Vaux hosts everything from Easter egg hunts and romantic candlelit evenings to private weddings, opera performances, and even (for schoolchildren) farmyard animals. (I only notice how consistently good his English is when, in a charming slip, Alexandre mentions the “sheeps” and donkeys currently on-site). One difficulty is that the estate is slightly too far from Paris to attract the city’s tourists easily, and so he is experimenting with a shuttle bus from a nearby railway station that will enable visitors to travel on public transportation from the capital.

When I ask what his one wish would be for the future of Vaux, he says it is to achieve that goal of four hundred thousand annual visitors. Obtaining money for running costs is hard – much harder than finding donors for capital restoration projects. He acknowledges that there is an element of chance in attracting visitors; the filming of a scene from Jackie Chan’s movie *Chinese Zodiac* at the château de Chantilly has increased Chinese visitor numbers there by fifteen thousand a year. While recognising Chantilly’s good fortune, Alexandre would prefer to attract more people to Vaux through careful marketing and planning, rather than simple luck.

He wryly explains that there is one question the family has long asked before introducing new attractions: “Is this too like Disney?” Vaux may be located near the Paris outpost of the American theme park, but any perceived influence on the estate’s marketing is unwelcome. Making Vaux ever more attractive to a wide range of potential visitors while maintaining its essential character as a historic French domain is a constant balancing act.

The challenge is not simply getting people to come; it is also drawing them into the gardens once they arrive. Le Nôtre’s designs can only be fully understood by moving *through* the gardens, on a promenade of surprise and discovery. But most visitors, Alexandre noticed, ventured only onto the terraces immediately beyond the house, to take in the initial view. So now there is a new map handed to all visitors with two suggested walking tours, designed to encourage them to experience particular vistas and destinations. The

Two of the great *parterres de broderie*, seen from the cupola of the 17th-century château.

estate is also planning to introduce rowing boats and *pédalos* (paddle boats) on Le Nôtre's great canal. Although at risk of seeming Disneyesque, it will be a delightful echo of the little gilded *barques* that Fouquet made available for his guests at the famous 1661 fête.

Alexandre is even thinking of turning Vaux's problems with the great *parterres de broderie* into a future attraction. The boxwood is suffering from the twin scourges of blight (*Volutella buxi*) and box tree moth (*Cydalima perspectalis*). Treatment for the blight is proving ineffective, and Alexandre is musing on the options should the boxwood die. New resistant varieties might one day allow the family to recreate the parterres according to Le Nôtre's original designs, replacing the early twentieth-century patterning of Achille Duchêne. Such a step could prove a new talking point and a new attraction in the gardens.

As we approach the end of our tour, Alexandre confesses that the hardest thing about fund-raising is not where the money goes, but where it comes from. Vaux is still a family home, and the family has strong ethics and values: should they take donations, for instance, from wealthy regimes with questionable human-rights records, or from companies that trade in fossil fuels? Would the benefits of such funding outweigh its contentious source? Such are the challenges of managing a place like Vaux in the twenty-first century.

The theme of family has run throughout our conversation. However much external advice and support they have, the family members must themselves make the big decisions about Vaux's management – and its future. Another generation is waiting to take over (Alexandre's two brothers have eight children between them) and the family will need to consider how best to pass on the torch. He would like to explore the idea of a not-for-profit foundation that allows the family to stay but makes it easier for others to help fund the future of this grand estate.

Unlike Fouquet, who enjoyed his fabulous creation just for one brief moment, his successors have to grapple with the complexities of time in their stewardship. Alexandre is ceaselessly pondering Vaux's history: both the legends of its creation and its subsequent evolution. Likewise, the estate's narrative suffuses his own – as the owner's son, the boy who lived there and left, the man who returned to take charge. It is in that context that he dreams of and makes plans for what lies ahead. While writing up our conversation afterwards, I am struck by how strongly the past and the future co-exist at Vaux, and how Alexandre lives in both at once, as he tries to map out what Vaux has been and envision what it will become. – Jill Sinclair

Contributors

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Hugh Johnson, OBE, and an officer in the *French Ordre nationale du Mérite*, is widely considered to be the world's best-selling writer on wine. His books include *The World Atlas of Wine* (1971), *Hugh Johnson's Wine Companion* (1983), *Vintage: The Story of Wine* (1989), and an autobiography, *A Life Uncorked* (2006). His *Pocket Wine Book*, first published

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