Cityscapes

Background

Gardens (parks) are common urban features found throughout the history of all civilizations. These spaces have always drawn people together to embark in convivial behaviors emblematic of community life, while representing the aims of the society that created them. Places like the Persian Fin Gardens at Kashan exemplify how society’s aims and desires were manifested in garden spaces created to be the very representation of an earthly paradise. Ultimately, gardens are places where man seeks to harmonize art and nature. Beginning with the Renaissance art in parks was used through sculptures that allegorically told of myths and histories reflective of classical tales and local traditions that would resonate with people. Art in gardens explored the idea of the journey through different stages—often evoking the transition from the underworld through the earthly realms and culminating with man’s arrival into paradise. Similar to Ulysses’ journey to Ithaca, it was not the destination that mattered, rather the journey itself and its experience of transcendence. Myths, fairy tales, dreams, and even nightmares were the inspirations drawn upon by designers, architects, and artists and very feelings these groups sought to evoke in their finished spatial product. To successfully convey this message, a variety of different kinds of objects were placed in the gardens: spolia from the ancient cultures, pieces of art commissioned for the space, and old sites of infrastructure grafted into new structures were all disparate pieces puzzled together to create sequence of events which culminated in the activity of walking through the promenade.

As garden design evolved concurrently with the concept of the public realm that grew out of sixteenth century France, garden spaces began to be more inclusive to the public and the definition of what we have come to think of as a park began to take shape. While urban living and cityscapes gained prominence over rural living and landscapes, the linear journey was replaced with less allegorical and more recreational park experiences. The experience of being in the park focused less on reimagining and reliving the experiences of mythic tales and instead centered on the concepts of co-habitation and civic life within urban environments. However, the idea of developing a sheltered, cultured paradise remained central in the design of gardens. In the late nineteenth century perhaps no other person did more to shape our modern conception of parks than Frederick Law Olmstead. He was not only was responsible for some of our greatest cultural treasures, like Central Park, but he developed park systems across the nation in places like Louisville that are still growing and evolving today. Olmstead’s Central Park was developed in the middle of what was then wilderness, hoping that metropolis of New York would catch up and grow around it. Other parks like Hyde Park in London and Bois de Boulogne in Paris were adapted from infrastructure intended for the benefit of the royal families into infrastructure intended for the benefit of the citizen.

Today, in increasingly dense cities planners and architects seldom have that luxury, instead having to carve out land within the urban fabric or reuse old pieces of infrastructure. All of has created a landscape of urban gardens and parks where there is no single typology, but a patchwork of different kinds of urban spaces. On the other hand we have rise of ‘pseudo-gardening’ in cities where surfaces on structures where natural earth does not exist are covered with ‘green’ areas such as roof tops, terraces, even facades. While this effectively ‘greens’ the cityscape the spatial and social function of occupying a park is increasingly lost creating a contradiction in how we see and use cities. We need to rethink the garden of the future. Our contemporary society has come to recognize the importance of play, recreation, and public parks, but finds itself in a situation where the space needed to carry out these proposals has only gotten scarcer, begging the question: what is the garden of the contemporary city and how do we create it?

Method

The studio will split into working teams composed of pairs. Each team will propose and analyze a site from a distinct park typology they consider to have the characteristics to be the new Garden of the contemporary city. At the end of the semester each team will present a design proposal of the City Garden. The goal is to have a
series of different proposals each derived from a different typology that reimagines the contemporary City Garden.

**Case studies**
- Bomarzo, Italy 1528-1588. (Pier Francesco Orsini)
- Xilitla, México, 1947. (Edward James)
- Storm King Art Center, 1960. (Ralph E. Ogden and H.Peter Stern)
- Botanical Garden Culiacan, México 2011. (Tatiana Bilbao)

**Site analysis**
- Urban context
- Access and connections
- Mapping of actual uses

**Urban strategies**
- Connect to the urban context
- Walking and bicycling routes
- Intersection of uses

**Project**
- Urban context
- Art integration
- Design proposal

The rough timeline of the studio is as follows. At first, teams will analyze the one of study cases listed above and read relevant literature. From this study you should seek to distill something similar to Cristopher Alexander's *A Pattern Language*, finding the relevant elements which make this garden unique--the relationship of the spectator to nature, the ordering of landscape elements, the procession, etc. After this brief exercise your team will find a garden or park which shares some of the key qualities you have studied. From this second case study you will seek to reinterpret it into a heavily densified urban environment. Perhaps your garden program will be atomized, verticalized, or driven underground, but the essence of your case study must not be lost. Each of these individual proposals will be analyzed at the mid-review. Following the review the five teams will maintain their independence but will work together to fit their five projects into a city, providing a cohesive vision of new types of urban infrastructure and a reinterpretation of what the contemporary garden is.

**Studio Travel**

The field trip aims to show the students different kinds of gardens and the dynamics they established in the contemporary city. We will visit emblematic parks of the country.

**Day 1** – Flight from New Heaven to Monterrey
**Day 2** – Monterrey, visit Parque Fundidora, flight to Culiacán.
**Day 3** – Culiacán, visit the Botanical Garden of Culiacan, flight to México City.
**Day 4 and 5** - Visit Mexico City: *Espacio Escultórico UNAM, Jardines del Pedregal, Bosque de Chapultepec, Cárcamo de Dolores, Luis Barragán Jardines Ortega and Cuadra San Cristóbal.*
Visit to the Botanical Garden
**Day 6** – Travel by road to Xilitla, San Luis Potosí
**Day 7** - Visit to "Las Pozas", travel by road to Mexico City.
**Day 8** – Flight from Mexico City to New Heaven

**Schedule**

**Week 1** - Introduction
**Week 2** – Study similar cases
**Week 3** - Study similar cases  
**Week 4** - Research  
**Week 5** – Field Trip  
**Week 5** - Project  
**Week 6** - Project  
**Week 7** - Project  
**Week 8** - Project  
**Week 9** – Mid-terms  
**Week 10** - Yale Spring Recess  
**Week 11** - Yale Spring Recess  
**Week 12** - Project  
**Week 13** - Project  
**Week 14** - Project  
**Week 15** - Project  
**Week 16** - Project  
**Week 17** - Project  
**Week 18** – Yale Final Reviews

**Bibliography**


