

**WE DO NOT HAVE AN ADEQUATE CONCEPTION OF ART  
UNTIL WE HAVE ONE THAT ACCOMMODATES GARDENS**

**By**

**John Francis Powell**

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## **ABSTRACT**

In the **first part** of this thesis (chapters 1 – 4) I argue that we do not have an adequate conception of art until we have one that accommodates gardens. I argue for this by demonstrating that gardens are sufficiently like paradigmatic types of art to be included in the category of art. While doing this I show not just how gardens are similar to other types of art but also how they combine qualities shared with other types of arts in a way that is unique.

In the **second part** (chapters 5 and 6) I develop this claim. I consider the dynamic nature of gardens and argue that gardens are most like performance arts such as music and dance, and that their distinctiveness relies on the particular dynamic character of the living organisms that constitute their principal materials.

I concludes this thesis (chapter 7) by considering gardens in the context of the contemporary art genres of installation and environmental art.

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# 1 Introduction

In the 18th century it was assumed that certain types of gardens were works of fine art and in the 21st century that same assumption is still a commonplace of popular media and popular opinion. Among philosophers in the 18th century, Immanuel Kant shared that assumption. Philosophy at that time had no need to decide whether gardens were or were not art. Along with painting, music and poetry, successful gardens, like tasteful dressing and beautiful (non-functional) furniture, were accepted as art. However, subsequently gardens were excluded from the list of high arts and ignored by philosophers who wrote about those arts. I will argue that there is no good reason for this exclusion.

In his *Critique of Judgement* Kant suggested a taxonomy of the fine arts (*beaux arts*) of his time, dividing them into three: the arts of speech, the formative arts and, as he described it, “the art of the beautiful play of sensations”. He then further divided the formative arts into plastic art (sculpture and architecture) and painting, and painting into “painting proper” and “landscape gardening”.<sup>1</sup> Painting proper involves “the beautiful portrayal of nature” and landscape gardening involves “the beautiful arrangement of its products”.<sup>2</sup>

Kant went on to say that gardens, or at least landscape gardens, are “for the eye only, just like painting”<sup>3</sup> and that a beautiful garden is one that meets an aesthetic standard. It does this because, like any work of art, a beautiful garden is, or should be, the object of a judgment of free beauty. A judgment of this kind is one that everyone *should* make just because they *should* find it a pleasure to look at. The first ‘should’ expresses a normative claim. The second ‘should’ expresses a claim about what is to be expected. Kant thought that because

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<sup>1</sup> Kant (2007) section 51: 187

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* section 51: 187

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* section 51: 188

everyone has the same sensory equipment it is almost certain that everyone will take pleasure in looking at a garden, if anyone does. This pleasure supplies a good reason for making the judgment that a garden is beautiful. In this respect, gardens are no different from paintings, sculptures or buildings that are lovely to look at. They all supply the same kind of reason for making a judgment that they are beautiful.

Kant's classification of landscape gardens as works of visual art reflected the commonsense view of his time. They were works of art because their creation required skill and planning and because they aspired to be beautiful to look at. The view that gardens were primarily works of visual art persisted and was strengthened by successive historical and aesthetic events such as the rise in importance of the picturesque as an aesthetic quality, the continuing influence of the Beaux Arts tradition and the influence of modernism as the dominant theory of the arts during much of last century. In fact, the notion that gardens are works of visual art like painting has remained unexplored until the last few decades.

I said that, since Kant's time, mainstream Western philosophical attention has moved away from gardens. Although philosophers have sometimes waxed lyrical about gardens in their non-professional writings they have largely ignored them in their professional work. When Mara Miller's *The Garden as a Work of Art*<sup>1</sup> was published in 1993 it was the first serious, sustained philosophical investigation in English of gardens as works of art for over 150 years. Since Miller's seminal book others by Ross<sup>2</sup>, Cooper<sup>3</sup> and Lee<sup>4</sup> have followed and there is a growing volume of scholarly writing on the topic to be found in journals and elsewhere.

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<sup>1</sup> Miller (1993)

<sup>2</sup> Ross (1998)

<sup>3</sup> Cooper (2006)

<sup>4</sup> Lee (2007)

As well as these philosophical books and articles there is now a steady flow of scholarly articles, essays and books investigating many aspects of gardens from the points of view of a wide range of other disciplines. Gardens are now being examined and written about by sociologists, art and garden historians, architects and landscape architects, archaeologists and philosophers of the environment.

This phenomenon can be explained at least partially by an increased popular, scientific and philosophical interest in the aesthetics and ecology of the natural environment. Accordingly, much of the recent writing considers gardens as either part of, or in opposition to, the natural environment. Philosophers who have written in this vein include Berleant<sup>1</sup>, Carlson<sup>2</sup> and Brady<sup>3</sup>. Similarly, the practice of garden design has for many designers become inextricably linked with the principles and practices of ecology.

My thesis falls into two parts. In the first part I argue that we do not have an adequate conception of art until we have one that accommodates gardens. I argue for this by demonstrating that gardens are sufficiently like paradigmatic types of art to be included in the category of art. While doing this I show not just how gardens are similar to other types of art but also how they combine qualities shared with other types of arts in a way that is unique. In the second part I develop this claim. I consider the dynamic nature of gardens and argue that gardens are most like performance arts such as music and dance, and that their distinctiveness relies on the particular dynamic character of the living organisms that constitute their principal materials.

Chapters two, three and four form the first part of my thesis. I begin chapter two by listing traditional criteria for adequacy of conceptions and noting those that I accept for the purpose of my thesis. I then examine the mimetic and

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<sup>1</sup> Berleant (2004), (2007)

<sup>2</sup> Carlson ((2007), (2008)

<sup>3</sup> Brady (2003)

expression theories to assess their adequacy for accommodating paradigmatic art works and gardens. I find that they are both inadequate. However, each of these conceptions identifies a significant aspect or property that some paradigmatic works of art possess. I show that some gardens also have that aspect or property.

In chapter three I examine the autonomous modernist conception and the institutional theory to assess their adequacy for accommodating paradigmatic art works and gardens. I find that they too are inadequate. However, like the mimetic and expression conceptions, autonomous modernism identifies a significant property of some paradigmatic works of art. All gardens have this property. In autonomous modernism form is essential to art and, because I identify gardens as “purposeful arrangements”, form is essential to them also.

I claim that the institutional theory disregards gardens because gardeners and garden designers are not officially artists and there is no garden subsystem in The Artworld. For the same reasons the institutional theory excludes any object which belongs to what ‘we’ consider a paradigmatic art form, (sculpture, for example), but which is produced in a society lacking an artworld, unless that object has been appropriated as a work of art by a society in which there is an artworld. I show that some contemporary and historical gardens possess qualities and features which some artworld-designated works of art possess, and which are the reason for their being designated works of art and valued as such. I claim that this unsatisfactory situation is due to problems inherent in the structures and the membership criteria of The Artworld itself.

In chapter four I introduce the cluster theory, and argue that it is the only adequate conception of art. It satisfies my criteria for adequacy and it also accommodates gardens. I conclude part one by claiming there is no good reason to exclude gardens from the category of art.

The second part of my thesis consists of chapters five to seven. In this part I explore the dynamic character of gardens. In chapter five I argue that dynamism is an essential feature of gardens, and an adequate understanding and appreciation of them should take account of it. I describe how time and change function in gardens and note ways in which this is both similar to, and different from, what occurs in other arts. I argue that gardens are distinctive because of the nature of their principal materials and the ways in which those materials change. I argue, further, that we experience gardens properly only when we pay attention to their temporal aspect as much as to their 'static' visual configurations, and that when we do this our experience of them is analogous to our experiences of musical performances and dance.

In chapter six I examine analogies between gardens and the performance arts of music and dance. Firstly, I offer an account of one way in which gardens present the passing of time and claim that it is analogous to the way in which music presents the passing of time. Secondly, I discuss analogies and disanalogies between gardens and dance.

In chapter seven I compare gardens with kinetic sculpture, installations and environmental art and show that gardens share important aspects and properties with these new paradigmatic arts forms as well.

My thesis concludes with a brief chapter in which I summarize the conclusions I draw from the principal arguments of both parts of my thesis.

I end this introduction by considering the prior question of what gardens are. In each of the three books about gardens written by philosophers during the last fifteen years the authors address the issue of defining gardens. Only Miller<sup>1</sup> offers a classical, or Socratic, definition in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions. However, I reject parts of her definition for reasons I will give. I

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<sup>1</sup> Miller, *op. cit.*



believe that it is important to have a clear idea of what I mean by the term 'garden' so that when I use it you know what I am referring to, and so that my claims can be evaluated appropriately. Although my interest is primarily in art gardens, my definition needs to include all gardens and not just paradigmatic art gardens. Any discussion of a garden-as-a-work-of-art presupposes the category 'garden', but need not imply that all gardens are works of art.

Cooper is of little help in the matter of definition. Rather than starting out from a classical definition of gardens he sees his whole book as "groping towards"<sup>1</sup> a definition of the term. This would be acceptable if the book did finally grope its way to an adequate definition, but that does not happen. Rather, Cooper inclines towards a definition that he expresses in the first chapter as follows: "'Garden' is an entirely familiar term, and nearly every English speaker knows what it means. Pressed to say what I mean, my response would be "The same as you who are pressing me mean by it – so you already know what I mean.""<sup>2</sup> Cooper is primarily interested in investigating the garden's ability to enable *eudaimonia* and is not interested in considering gardens as works of art. For this reason, and more particularly because of its lack of usefulness, I ignore his 'groping'.

For Ross<sup>3</sup>, gardens are too various to be confined by a definition so, instead of attempting one, she argues for an understanding of the term based on the Wittgensteinian notion of family resemblance. An advantage of this approach is that it enables borderline cases, many of which would serve as good counter-examples to more rigorous definitions, to be brought under the concept of 'garden' without elaborate cases having to be made for their inclusion. Using Wittgenstein's explanation of family resemblance, any two gardens can be expected to share identifying traits, but there are no properties common to all members of the class. However, I reject Ross's invoking of Wittgenstein's

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<sup>1</sup> Cooper, *op. cit.* p. 15

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 13

<sup>3</sup> Ross, *op. cit.* p. 8

argument for the use of family resemblance as a defining tool and accordingly I reject her definition based on it. Wittgenstein's theory is useful because of its wide embrace, but his use of the term 'family resemblance' to describe how his definition works is unacceptable. This is because necessary and sufficient conditions *do* exist to describe a family and its members, and those conditions do not include resemblance. An adequate classical definition already exists for a biological family and, with the adoption of a small set of additional criteria, for a family as a social unit. However, Wittgenstein's notion of family resemblance remains of some value for my purposes, because it can be seen as a precursor to the cluster theory of art. In chapter four I argue that there is no adequate, classical definition of art and, thus, a cluster definition, which offers a set of criteria that might not be all met by any work of art, is the only acceptable definition of art.

Miller's definition has two clauses. She states that a garden is "[i] any purposeful arrangement of natural objects (such as sand, water, plants, rocks, etc.) with exposure to the sky or open air, [ii] in which form is not fully accounted for by purely practical considerations such as convenience."<sup>1</sup> I will accept that part of her first clause which states that a garden is "any purposeful arrangement of natural objects (such as sand, water, plants, rocks, etc.)...". It is adequate for my purposes now because it is enough to pick out gardens, even though it does not identify all their essential features. In particular, it ignores the dynamism of gardens, which is going to turn out to be an essential feature of them. However, I do not accept the second part of her first clause. Not all gardens need to have exposure to sky or open air. Interior gardens at scales ranging from Victorian terrariums to large-scale municipal conservatories and 'winter gardens' are examples of types of gardens that an adequate definition needs to include.

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<sup>1</sup> Miller *op. cit.* p. 15

I reject the second clause of her definition for two reasons. Firstly, there is no good reason to deny that kitchen and herb gardens are gardens. Moreover, it is appropriate to take aesthetic pleasure in, and make aesthetic judgments about, them. Secondly, gardens laid out according to practical considerations, such as ease of maintenance or optimum productivity, may be beautiful because they are well suited to a purpose, just as a well designed tennis racquet may be beautiful because it is well suited to the purpose for which it was made. Moreover, a well designed racquet may also be lovely to look at just as a well designed vegetable garden may be lovely to look at. In Kantian terms gardens, then, may be the objects not only of judgments of free beauty but also of dependent beauty.

Miller's shortened definition comfortably includes the gardens that are commonly considered to be works of art. Examples of such gardens are Monet's garden at Giverny, Charles Jencks and Maggie Keswick's *Garden of Cosmic Speculation* in Scotland, the gardens of the Palace of Versailles outside Paris and the gardens at Stourhead and Stowe in England. These gardens are all well known and highly regarded, and, like Miller, I am interested in them, their materials and the arrangement of their materials. However, other, more 'ordinary' gardens may also potentially demonstrate qualities by virtue of which they may be considered works of art and, accordingly, I am equally interested in such gardens. Examples of gardens of this sort are municipal bedding displays and well designed vegetable plots, and Miller's shortened definition comfortably includes gardens like these too.

I therefore adopt the shortened version of Miller's definition as a working definition: a garden is "any purposeful arrangement of natural objects (such as sand, water, plants, rocks, etc.)...". At the same time I acknowledge, along with Miller, that many gardens also incorporate unnatural objects, such as fibreglass sculptures, ceramic birdbaths, glass, mosaics, etc.

## **2 Conceptions of Art – Mimesis and the Expression Theory**

What we now think of as art has been produced throughout human history. There have been attempts from time to time to formulate an intellectual framework by which to explain, identify and justify the practices whereby it is produced and to classify and evaluate their products. These frameworks, or conceptions, have varied in scope, emphasis and purpose. Some have proposed a classificatory definition, others have sought to explain the essence and value of the practices and their products, and others have functioned as apologies for highly novel or subversive products and activities. In this chapter I examine two important conceptions in order to establish their adequacy in terms of accommodating gardens. These are mimesis and the expression theory.

Traditionally, an adequate conception of art should satisfy metaphysical and epistemological criteria. For example, some philosophers have assumed that an adequate conception of art should (i) identify art's essential nature and value, (ii) provide the means to identify works of art and (iii) not exclude paradigmatic works of art or include objects generally agreed not to be works of art. One consequence of my examination of historical conceptions is that art has no essential nature or value and therefore the metaphysical tasks outlined in (i) above would not make sense. However, I will accept that an adequate conception should enable those who accept it to identify, and perhaps evaluate art objects both individually and comparatively, and it should not exclude paradigmatic examples of art nor include objects generally agreed not to be art. In other words, I accept that an adequate conception of art should meet the second and third criteria cited above. I sometimes refer to these two criteria as the identity and the inclusion criteria respectively.

## ***Mimesis***

### **Conception of Art**

In *The Republic*<sup>1</sup>, Plato identified image making, or mimesis, as the essence of a collection of practices that included music, drama, dance, poetry and painting. Plato did not categorize only these activities as art. 'Art' was a wider concept that implied skill, and elsewhere Plato mentioned the arts of bed making, shoe making, hunting, warfare and politics. The images that musicians, dramatists, dancers, poets and painters made are images that represent actual things. Images represent actual things because they look like, sound like or feel like them. They are perceptually similar to them. Looking at a painting of a table is like looking at a table because the image looks like a table looks from a certain angle, in a certain light. Similarly, listening to a melody that has been composed to imitate a cuckoo's song is like listening to a cuckoo because the composed melody sounds like the bird's song on account of its sharing pitch and rhythmic characteristics with it. In other words, images depict the objects they represent. This simple account of depiction, which ignores all the complications of contemporary accounts, such as those of Wollheim<sup>2</sup> and Goodman<sup>3</sup>, is adequate for my purposes.

For Plato, the value of images lay not in the degree to which they resembled what they depicted (their life-likeness), or exhibited beauty, but in the opportunity they offered for a better understanding of the world and how to live in it. He did not think they offered very much of an opportunity. For Plato, images were "third in succession from the throne of truth."<sup>4</sup> They belonged on the lowest tier of his metaphysical hierarchy, together with dreams and hallucinations, and appealed to people because they aroused strong emotions in them. For both these reasons they were unreliable guides for life.

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<sup>1</sup> Plato (2004) pp. 5-14

<sup>2</sup> Wollheim (1987)

<sup>3</sup> Goodman (1968)

<sup>4</sup> Plato *op. cit.* p. 9

For Aristotle, the essence of music, drama, dance, poetry and painting was still mimesis and he understood mimesis to be representation by virtue of perceptual resemblances. Like Plato, he believed that abstract arts like music or dance were able to represent as well as the non-abstract arts could. Thus dance "... imitates character, emotion, and actions by rhythmical movement..."<sup>1</sup>, and music uses rhythm and harmony (melody to us) to imitate "... the passions or states of the soul."<sup>2</sup> However, he offered a different account from Plato's of the value of images. He thought they could offer insights that would enable people to live better. For example, tragedy enabled the recognition that the world was such that good people (like us) could do morally bad things through no fault of their own. This insight was achieved through the catharsis of pity and fear. In *Poetics* Aristotle wrote that tragedy culminates by means of pity and fear in the cleansing of those same passions.<sup>3</sup> In other words, we feel pity for the tragic hero and fear for ourselves and these emotions arise from seeing that the events of the kind that happened to the tragic hero could happen to ourselves. The fact that tragedy arouses strong emotions did not mean we could not learn valuable lessons from it, and in thinking this way Aristotle contradicted what Plato had believed about the value of strong emotions.

The mimetic conception of Plato and Aristotle remained the most accepted philosophical statement of an art conception right through until the 19th century. Although it lasted a long time it did not remain untested. Well before the controversial art products of the late 19th and early 20th centuries appeared and sounded its death knell as a theory of even the visual arts, more conventional arts products had been testing mimesis almost since its first formulation. Architecture was regarded in ancient Greece as a technical accomplishment rather than image making and therefore it never fitted under the conception. However, in retrospect, the important buildings of Ancient

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<sup>1</sup> Aristotle (1994-2009) 1:1

<sup>2</sup> Grout (1980) p. 87

<sup>3</sup> Aristotle (1941) pp. 1455-1475

Greece, and of all the major empires and cities that followed – consider Hagia Sophia - have long been considered to be art in spite of their not being mimetic. Renaissance gardens such as that at the Villa Lante lack significant mimetic elements yet have long been considered art. And music's development as an art prior to the 19th century – consider Bach's *Art of Fugue* – meant that it had long outgrown any explanation of its essence and value based on mimesis.

I noted above that the conception of mimesis became generally untenable in the face of developments in many of the arts from the late 19th century onwards. Early 20<sup>th</sup> century modernism's inclination towards abstraction was problematic as were later developments in Dadaism and aleatoric art, to name just two styles. The *objets trouvés* of Duchamp and his fellow Dadaists made statements about art but they made no attempt to represent anything, they simply *were* something. The aleatoric artists like Cage and his followers made art based on the throw of a dice or the dictates of the *I Ching* and for them art had nothing to do with representation, although, in retrospect, some may have chosen to argue that it represented the chaotic nature of matter and the universe.

Architecture and music, *de facto* exclusions from the conception for centuries, were now joined by the previously mimetic visual arts, and any other arts to the degree that those arts could or wanted to become abstract. Painting and sculpture were no longer essentially depictive and therefore the mimetic conception was no longer adequate to describe them. Furthermore, as noted earlier, some arts, including most music, had not been essentially mimetic for many centuries.

The conception fails to satisfy the inclusion criterion because neither the earlier paradigmatic works mentioned above, nor 20th century ones such as Schwartz's *Bagel Garden* (see *Figure 5*, p. 58) and Cage's *4'33*, are mimetic, and therefore the conception is unable to accommodate them. It also fails the identity criterion. If mimesis were to be used to identify objects as works of art then you

would identify many things that are not art. Children's toys, signs on toilet doors and anybody's whistling in imitation of a tui's song would all be works of art. Conversely, it would also exclude many objects, such as Bach's *Art of Fugue* and the other works mentioned above, that most people agree are works of art.

Moreover, a mimetic theory in which the only form of representation was depictive never worked for literature. It worked for dramatic performances because looking at and listening to the actor speaking his lines was like looking at and listening to the character praising his faithful friend or pleading with his wife not to desert him. Dramatic performances do depict, but novels, and poems read silently, do not. Novels might encourage readers to imagine seeing or hearing characters praising friends or pleading with wives and to imagine seeing a wife returning to her pleading husband, but words do not represent as images do.

Depictive representation of emotions has been understood to be a feature of the abstract arts ever since Plato and Aristotle included music and dance in their lists of image making activities. The ways in which these representations occur are complex and I consider them in detail later. At this stage it is enough to reiterate that abstract arts can depict emotions directly and that these depictions are based on perceptual resemblances. For example, music may represent sadness because it has a melody that is tortuous, slow and in a minor key.<sup>1</sup> In this case the music represents sadness because it sounds like the way sad people sound when they speak or otherwise express themselves vocally.

The traditional mimetic theories of the arts employed a concept of mimesis in which perceptual resemblances were the basis of depictive representation. I call this direct depictive representation. In cases of direct depictive representation images represent actual things because they look like, sound like or feel like them and we are aware of these resemblances through our senses. However,

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<sup>1</sup> Cooke (1959)



an adequate account of depictive representation needs to account not only for *perceptual* resemblances but also for *perceived* resemblances. Perceived resemblances are not necessarily based on perceptual resemblances. Perceived resemblances do not necessarily depend on whether an image looks, sounds or feels like what it represents: when perceived resemblances are non-perceptual they depend for resemblance on socially agreed conventions that involve the devices of metaphor and metonymy. When perceived resemblances are involved I call the process symbolic, or indirect, representation. I now show how both of these types of representation function.

Depictive representation depends on perceptual likeness between an image and what is being represented by it. Words, on the other hand, are not at all perceptually like what they represent. Thus, the word 'blossom' does not look, sound, smell or feel like a blossom and nor is it structured like one. However it still successfully represents blossoms to English speakers. Both images and words can represent in a way I describe as direct. The two steps occurring in direct representation by images and words are shown below.

A painting of a blossom  
↓  
represents (depicts) a blossom  
because it looks like one

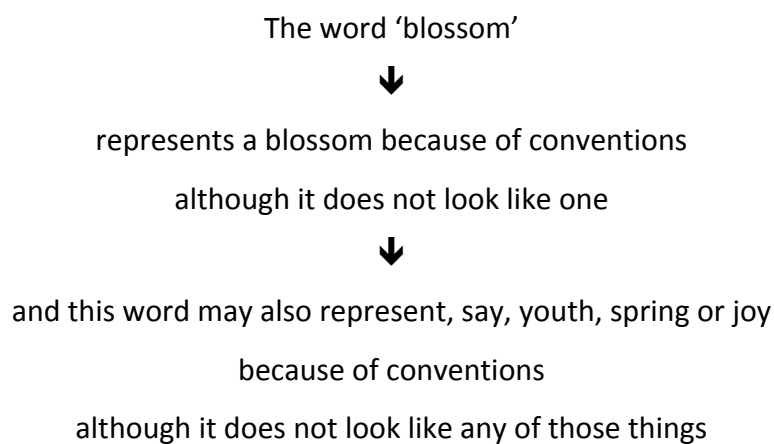
**Figure 1 Direct depictive representation.**

The word 'blossom'  
↓  
represents a blossom because of conventions  
although it doesn't look like one

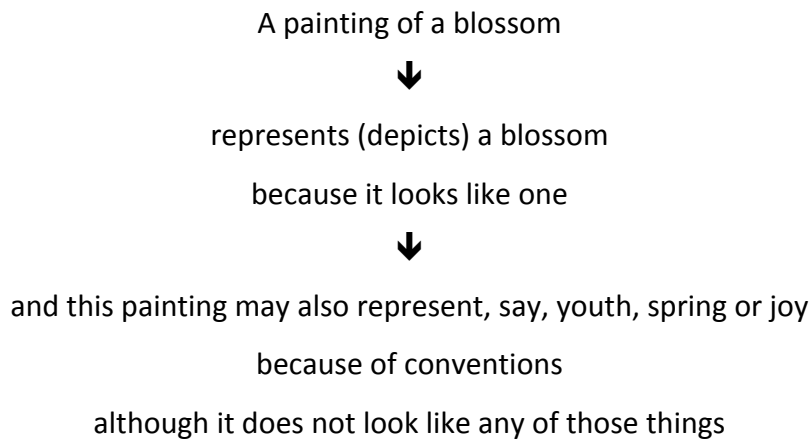
**Figure 2 Direct linguistic representation.**

The conventions referred to in the case of direct linguistic representation above are the socially agreed conventions within a culture that enable particular arbitrary signs (words) to represent other particular things.

Symbolic, or indirect, representation is a more complex type of representation that can also involve both images and words. It functions partially as in the above modes but it involves an additional step. The three steps occurring in symbolic representation by words and images are shown below.



*figure 3 Symbolic linguistic representation.*



*Figure 4 Symbolic depictive representation.*

The conventions referred to in step three of each types of symbolic representation are different from the conventions already discussed above, which allow words to function as arbitrary signs for other things. The conventions here referred to involve metaphor, which is based on perceived,

but not necessarily perceptual, similarities, and metonymy, which is based on relationships such as cause and effect or part and whole. The conventions that allow metaphor and metonymy to work are socially agreed, but need not be arbitrary.

In the example of symbolic linguistic representation above (*Figure 3*, p. 18) the represented blossom may in turn represent youth or spring. It may represent youth because of perceived (cf. perceptual) similarities between blossom and youth: blossoms appear early in the annual seasonal cycle and that therefore reminds us of youth, which is the early stage of life. This representation of youth by blossoms involves metaphor. The blossom may also represent spring because it reminds us of the whole season of which it is a part, and that representation involves metonymy.

In the example above of symbolic depictive representation (*Figure 4*, p. 18) the painting of a blossom depicts a blossom and in turn the painting may represent youth or spring. The first stage of this process is depictive and the second stage is non-depictive. Thus, the painted image represents the blossom by looking like it and the blossom may in turn represent, say, youth or spring or joy to the initiated because, although it looks nothing like it, it reminds us of those things by virtue of perceived connections between blossoms and youth. This symbolic depictive representation occurs in the same way as the word 'blossom' metaphorically represents, say, youth in symbolic linguistic representation. Both direct and symbolic (indirect) depictive representation occur in gardens and typical examples of them will be discussed in the following section.

My discussion above has focused on symbolic (indirect) representation. However, although this form of representation was not envisaged by Plato's and Aristotle's conception, taking it into account does not turn a so-modified mimesis theory into an adequate conception of art. It remains a fact that all art is not essentially mimetic, and therefore a mimetic conception modified in that way still does not satisfy my identity and inclusion criteria.

## **Gardens**

Gardens may have individual mimetic features such as floral clocks, topiary mythological figures or animals, parterre patterns, sculptures, statuary, 'Greek' temples and 'Chinese' pagodas. Gardens may also have linked elements that form larger-scale mimetic features such as the much described, classical passages devised at Stowe. All these features are examples of direct depictive representation.

Some constructed garden landscapes, such as the rock gardens of 19th century Europe, were small scale re-creations parts of natural landscapes such as the Swiss and Italian Alps. These rock gardens were able to bring an image of the Alps into a garden and were coincidentally able to import that highly valued 19th century aesthetic quality, sublimity. Gardens today often aim to re-create natural landscapes, either pictorially, as in the desert recreations of the *Australian Garden* in Victoria, Australia, or by employing ecologies or plants found in a particular native landscape, as in Waitangi Park in Wellington, New Zealand. The mimetic features of all these gardens are examples of direct depictive representations of natural landscapes and ecological systems existing elsewhere. These representations are based on perceived visual resemblances between the gardens and the landscapes and ecological systems gardens they represent.

The 19th century rock gardens described above were an attempt to depict an exotic landscape within a garden. More commonly though, gardens have aimed to re-create a desirable geographical or historical 'elsewhere' not by importing a whole landscape but by simply importing plants, layouts and built form typical of that other place. In this way, fashionable suburban and city gardeners and designers sometimes attempt to represent Italian gardens. Cottage gardenists often aim to represent small pieces of Victorian England, while sophisticated contemporary gardeners may aim for a Bloomsbury look. The mimetic features

of all these gardens are examples of direct depictive representation, either of other gardens or spatial configurations existing or imagined to exist elsewhere. These representations are based on *perceptual* resemblances between the gardens and the other gardens and spatial configurations they represent.

In some historical periods gardens have sought to represent paradise. Sometimes this has occurred by way of depicting plants and layouts that the initiated would have recognized as representing paradise because the plants looked like those they believed grew in paradise and because the layouts looked like what they believed paradise looked like. In these cases, representations were based on perceived visual resemblances between real and imagined objects and places. At other times, paradise was depicted more abstractly. In such gardens, symmetrical layouts and qualities such as pleasantness, comfort, fecundity and harmony would have been understood as representing paradise because they felt, looked, sounded and perhaps even smelt like how the initiated imagined paradise to feel, look, sound and smell. For example, early Muslim gardens and mediaeval Christian gardens were often characterized by a rectilinear enclosure and a rectilinear layout divided by water canals leading to a central pond. The gardens often walled off the outside world, contained plants that profited from the shelter and support the walls offered and supplied shade and water for visitors. Although these individual objects and relationships meant different things in different local cultures there was a general understanding that such garden elements expressed harmony, plenty, shade and coolness and so on, and that these qualities were in turn suggestive of paradise. In cases like this, gardens depicted paradise not only because they looked like it but also because they felt, sounded and perhaps even smelt like it. Thus, the representations of paradise achieved in this way were based on a variety of perceived perceptual resemblances.

Victorian English public parks were, in a way that Plato may have approved of, designed to be expressive of 'good' (i.e. aristocratic) living. The parks depicted elements of the contemporary aristocratic parklands by virtue of their visual

resemblances to them. They did this in the hope that all the citizenry might, by being allowed to experience an aristocratic landscape, become aware of and ideally adopt the 'higher' values associated with that class. The depictions were expressive of values and they represented a way of living that was deemed desirable and therefore to be aspired to.

I have provided examples of gardens that directly depict whole landscapes and also other gardens and places. However, gardens can exhibit symbolic depictive representation too and thereby represent a range of ideas and concepts. A typical example of this type of representation can be seen in a formal 17th century European garden such as that at Versailles. At Versailles, the relentless, extensive geometry of the layout cuts through the landscape, demolishing and reshaping everything in its path in a way that has little respect for existing vegetation and landform, or for the subtleties and idiosyncrasies of the site. To a visitor, this looks like ruthless treatment of the landscape and its resources and it may in turn put her in mind of the way an absolute monarch behaves towards his subjects. The power exerted over the landscape is perceived to be like the power of the absolute monarch over his people. In this way the garden is a metaphor for absolute power.

The gardens of classical Rome provide further examples of gardens that exhibit symbolic depictive representation. Those gardens were replete with statuary, buildings and other built form. This meant that they were able not only to depict a range of people, object and scenes but also to represent symbolically quite complex, abstract notions. For example, Kuttner<sup>1</sup> argues convincingly that the gardens of Hadrian's villa at Tivoli, quite apart from their splendid and enduring aesthetic and depictive qualities, would have represented to initiated guests Rome's and the emperor's naval prowess and history, although they did not look like those things. According to Kuttner, they did this by virtue of the way different depictive and non-depictive elements were arranged and

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<sup>1</sup> Kuttner (2003)

organized three-dimensionally with reference to each other and to the viewers. For example she describes how, "... a flooded stadium garden and artificial river source cavern convokes [*sic*] the world's rivers feeding into the Mediterranean, as if the peripatetic Hadrian had authored both the global environment for his journeys of governance and its cultural geography."<sup>1</sup> She further describes how, "From the walkways and from within, the pool edges ... become the margins of a periplus [*circumnavigation*] around Hadrian's empire: Asia, Egypt and Europe."<sup>2</sup>

Writers<sup>3 4</sup> agree that Japanese and Chinese gardens can be directly depictive, like the Alpine rock gardens referred to above, or, for the initiated, they can symbolically represent complex ideas concerning nature, the soul, permanence and impermanence, and so on. Both direct and indirect depictive representation are often found in combination in Asian monastery gardens. The monastery gardens served as meditative tools to encourage monks in their pursuit of higher things by depicting, more or less realistically, the world, and by representing symbolically life's meanings and challenges seen according to the worldview of the monastery's belief system.

Plato and Aristotle did not consider gardens to be images and therefore their mimetic conception had no need to include them. I have shown, however, that many gardens do have features by virtue of which they are mimetic, although many do not. Plato's conception fails to accommodate these because neither direct nor symbolic representation is essential to gardens. Moreover, mimetic theories fail because they do not capture what is distinctive about gardens. Nonetheless, it is reasonable to think that making mimetic gardens that provide practical and moral knowledge about how to live well would in theory have been justified and valuable in the views of Plato and Aristotle. Examples of such

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 142

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 142

<sup>3</sup> Du Cane (2003)

<sup>4</sup> Turner (2011)

gardens are the ecologically balanced gardens of today, which organize their elements in imitation of natural places and systems for the purpose of exhibiting models for desirable activities such as healthy communal living and caring for the earth.

Aristotle's notion that mimesis involved not just imitation, but also intensification, of the real world is perhaps more helpful than Plato's view when it comes to considering gardens and, by adopting it, it is possible to see a garden *in loco* as an expression of the essence of the site and surrounding rather than just as an imitation of another site. Useful and interesting too is Cooper's thinking when he writes of gardens in which in various ways, "the earth itself has been pressed into service to express itself."<sup>1</sup>

In summary, gardens can represent either directly or indirectly (symbolically). The demand for gardens to fulfill these functions has fluctuated throughout history. Both were popular during the 18th and early 19th centuries and both were unpopular during the modernist period. But gardens' meanings are not limited to or dominated by what can be conveyed through representation. Gardens can depict and symbolically represent, but these functions are neither essential elements nor distinctive aspects of them, and neither do they provide adequate reasons for valuing them. Moreover, the fulfillment of one or both of these functions does not provide adequate grounds for identifying gardens as works of art.

Mimesis, understood as depictive representation, has turned out to be an inadequate conception for even the visual arts because many contemporary examples do not depict and so would be excluded. Mimesis, understood as depictive representation, was not ever adequate for architecture, music and literature because most paradigmatic examples were excluded. However, mimesis of the kinds discussed is a significant feature of many paradigmatic

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<sup>1</sup> Cooper *op. cit.* p. 84



works of art and is a reason why they are valued. It has turned out to be an important characteristic of many gardens and is at least one way in which they convey meanings. Therefore, in this respect, some gardens are on a par with some universally accepted works of art.

## ***The Expression Theory of Art***

### **Conception of Art (A) – Art Expresses Emotion**

The expression theory of art is the conception commonly associated with the artists and art works of the romantic period in Western Europe. That period is, in turn, associated with the 19th century, but its origins lay in the late 18th century and its products continued to be produced by some artists well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. During the period's 19th century heyday, art was increasingly talked about, thought about and indulged in, and the term 'art' was generally understood by laypeople, artists and philosophers. There was little need to (re)define the term because everyone knew what it meant. However, art's products and the roles of art and artists in society changed considerably during that time and those changes lead eventually to art's being redefined, albeit retrospectively, just as the 19th century was ending and romanticism was already in decline.

The expression theory replaced mimesis as the predominant *de facto* conception of art as the 19th century progressed, though representation did not disappear as a significant feature of many art forms. Representation, and the meanings associated with it, could not disappear completely without taking with them a cornerstone of the way in which all literature functions. Although the expression theory was the predominant theory of art, it coexisted with mimesis and, later, with modernism, and this is typical of the way in which changes in practice and understanding of practice occur in the arts. Except for the cases of revolutionary changes, such as have been decreed in Mao's China and in the early days of the Soviet Union, neither art practice nor the

conceptions it implies change overnight. Conceptions and practices overlap, sometimes comfortably and sometimes contradictorily. The fact that practices and conception overlap and co-exist may have contributed in part to the formulation of the all-embracing institutional theory in the 1970's and it is certainly reflected in the criteria adopted in various versions of the cluster theory. I examine the institutional and cluster theories in the following chapter.

The expression theory conceived of the essence of art as being concerned with the expression of an artist's emotion or imaginative vision suffused with emotion. In its simplest and most restrictive form this concept entails that artists are people who are inspired by emotional experiences and who use their skill with words, paint, music, marble, movement and so on to intentionally embody their emotions in a work of art with a view to stimulating the same emotions in an audience.<sup>1</sup> According to this conception, an artist feels the emotions that he intentionally expresses in his work and an audience feels the same emotion when they experience that work, provided that the artist has 'embodied' his emotion in his work. These conditions are individually necessary and jointly sufficient. This means that if the artist has not successfully embodied his emotions or vision in his work, or if he feels no particular emotion and does not intend to express one but instead writes his poem or paints his picture for some other motive, then what he produces is not art. Therefore, not all paintings, compositions, poems and so on are works of art.

Understood in this way, works of art were valuable because the expression of emotion was valued, and because they led to greater knowledge of experience and emotional responses and potentially to increased self awareness, which were all deemed to be valuable. However, at the same time, art was becoming more highly valued because artists themselves, and their work, were becoming more highly valued. These processes of revaluation had begun in the Renaissance but progress had been slow. It is salutary to remember that in the

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<sup>1</sup> Graham (2005) pp. 133-145

18th century Bach was a servant-composer who was employed by his patrons in the way a wealthy person today might retain their own dressmaker or interior decorator. Although in this instance Bach was valuable to his patron, the idea that Bach could be independent, and furthermore creatively independent, was not acceptable. However, progress was being made, and by the 19th century it had become commonplace to regard artists as valuable and independent members of society. By that time, artists were seen increasingly as inspired, creative individuals who were 'different from the rest of us', and their vision, experiences and emotional insights were things non-artists should value and experience for themselves through the artists' works. It is interesting to speculate whether this change in attitude towards works of art in the Romantic period may have been a precursor to the special aesthetic attitude that one branch of modernism was to encourage in viewers from the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, even though versions of the expression theory itself continued to have adherents until the middle of that century, and indeed still do today.

The expression conception was first explored philosophically at a time when it was still generally understood to be true of artistic practice by contemporary artists and their audiences. However, the theory found its most prominent advocate at the end of the century in Croce, and later on in Croce's translator and disciple, Collingwood. Croce's *Aesthetics*<sup>1</sup> appeared in 1902, by which time, although musical romanticism was to continue to survive in the work of composers like Rachmaninoff and Sibelius for another 50 or so years, revolutionary changes had already been evident across many of the arts, including music, for a decade or so. Croce was writing at the end of a century of romanticism and his retrospective glance seemed a fitting end to that period, although it offered no way to understand the 'new' that was beginning to happen around him. His understanding of the primacy of emotion in the creation and reception of art was reinforced by the inclination of the arts during the romantic period away from form and towards content and especially

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<sup>1</sup> Croce (1929)

'emotional' content. The rise of abstract music, which by virtue of its being abstract was seen to be an ideal vehicle for 'pure' emotion, and lyric poetry, as well as the increased popularity of forms such as the novel and the song-cycle, both of which were seen as ideal conveyors of particularized emotions, all contributed to an environment within which the expression theory could take root and flourish.

A further classical exposition of the expression theory was provided by Tolstoy, who believed that art was an activity intimately connected with moral good. He extended the theory to embrace the production of what he understood to be 'good' art. In his influential essay *What is Art?*,<sup>1</sup> published in 1897, he offered two conditions for art: (1) in a work of art an artist communicates his previously experienced emotions to a viewer and, equally, (2) those emotions should be stimulated by appropriate events, by which he meant events expressive of universal brotherhood. The focus on morality in his conception reminds us of a similar focus in the mimetic conceptions of the Ancient Greeks and anticipates a similar focus in the conceptions of the engaged modernists in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Conversely, the theories that Croce and Collingwood espoused can, by virtue of their concentration of the importance of the artist and his product, be seen as being similar to the 20<sup>th</sup> century art for art's sake modernist conception.

I now describe two objections to the strict formulations of the expression theory described above. Firstly, the classical formulation, which entails that an artist has an emotional response to some thing, event or person and as a result of that intentionally creates a work that embodies the emotion with the aim of stimulating the same emotions in her audience, is inadequate. This is so because, in most historical and many contemporary instances, it is extremely difficult if not impossible to identify adequately (a) the emotions an artist experienced and embodied in her work and (b) her intention to communicate them, and (c) to establish whether the audience experienced the same

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<sup>1</sup> Tolstoy (1899)

emotions when they experienced her work. Because we cannot identify or confirm points (i) - (iii) we cannot identify the artist's work as art.

Secondly, if the overall emotional tone of Beethoven's *Symphony No. 9* is generally agreed to be, say, joyful, how did Beethoven, who was known to compose only slowly and with much difficulty, and who at the time he wrote the work was deaf, frustrated and given to bitterness, maintain joyful moods throughout the periods of time it took him to write and revise this lengthy work?

As I have shown, there are logical objections to the expression theory, but simply by rejecting the conception's base claim that art is essentially about communicating emotion the conception becomes unsustainable. While the conception may have been adequate for some of the typical art of its time it is inadequate for much of the art that followed and preceded it. All art is not expressive of the emotion an artist felt in a particular situation and all art does not stimulate in the listener feelings an artist has intentionally embodied in the work. However, the expression theory has focused on an aesthetically valuable property of some works of art. Accordingly, we value some work of art because they express emotions, not necessarily the artist's, in various ways. Nevertheless the conception is inadequate because it does not allow us to identify works of art. Not all art is expressive as understood by the expression theory and, therefore, the expression conception does not allow us to distinguish between art and non-art. In other words, it fails to meet the identity criterion. Furthermore, under this conception, paradigmatic works of art such as Malevich's *White on White* painting or Stockhausen's *Klavierstücke XI* are neither works of art nor, as works of art, valuable. This is because they are not expressions, as the expression theory understands that term. Therefore, because the conception cannot accommodate these paradigmatic works of art, it is inadequate on that basis too. The classical expression theory, then, satisfies neither of my criteria for adequacy.

## **Conception of Art (B) – Art is Expressive of Emotion**

Although the expression theory has proved inadequate as a general theory that does not mean that art does not express emotions, or that this is not a significant feature or a valid reason for valuing some art. Art clearly can express emotions, but does not necessarily do so, and does not necessarily do so in accordance with the expression theory.

I will now examine ways in which works such as Malevich's painting and Stockhausen's piano piece mentioned above may 'express' emotions. I will follow writers such as Peter Kivy<sup>1</sup> and Stephen Davies<sup>2</sup> and use the term 'expressive'. When I say a work is expressive of an emotion this does not imply the expression theory.

An expressive representational painting, but not a poem, has the potential to depict events and people in such a way that emotions associated with such events and people, such as love, jealousy, joy, sadness, may be depicted also. This happens because the representations of the events or people look like the way events are, or people behave, when a particular emotion is experienced. In this way, according to this conception, emotions can be expressed in a work and may be felt by the viewer. However, not all arts are representational and this has lead philosophers to consider other ways in which the arts, and especially abstract arts, may be able to be expressive of emotions. Central to their claims is an understanding that although abstract arts do not represent directly (depict) objects, people and events, they can still be expressive of emotions because of qualities their constituent elements possess individually and collectively.

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<sup>1</sup> Kivy (1980)

<sup>2</sup> Davies (2006)

Deryck Cooke's<sup>1</sup> pioneering work in the 1950's concerned the expression of emotion in abstract music and led him to develop an extensive 'lexicon' of musical units that were expressive of particular emotions. In recent years, Stephen Davies<sup>2</sup> and Peter Kivy<sup>3</sup> have considerably expanded Cooke's earlier work. Davies claims that music can express emotions because (i) its structure may mirror the dynamics of the structure of the physiology of emotion or because (ii) it can resemble human vocal utterance or because (iii) music's movement may mirror human comportment and behaviour.<sup>4</sup>

A full understanding of Davies' claim (i) assumes a detailed knowledge of the qualities of, and the ways in which, whole pieces of music and their constituent elements are assembled. However, in brief, in a piece of music a composer devises (composes) and arranges large and small scale musical elements to create a composition. All the elements, ranging from individual notes, melodies and chords through progressions of notes, melodies and chords, to whole movements and series of movements, and the ways in which and the speed(s) at which these elements occur and are combined, create audible dynamic patterns of tension and release. All these patterns are available to be heard by a listener. They are aural perceptual patterns that can potentially be perceived to be analogous to the felt patterns of tension and release that characterize the experience of an emotion in a listener. The music resembles the emotion because it *sounds* like how having the emotion *feels*. Therefore I call this a crossover perceptual resemblance, and this is one way in which music can be said to be expressive of emotion.

Davies claim (ii) is more straightforward. It states that music can be expressive of, say, sadness because it sounds like the way a person sounds like when we believe them to be sad. Thus, a melody may have a slow, dragging rhythm and

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<sup>1</sup> Cooke (1959)

<sup>2</sup> Davies *op. cit.*

<sup>3</sup> Kivy (1980)

<sup>4</sup> Davies *op. cit.* pp. 135-162

tempo and have a melodic shape that moves repeatedly over the interval of a minor third. A listener hearing a melody like this may be aware of aural perceptual resemblances between the melody and the way a sad person's speech or other vocal utterances sound in terms of their pitch and rhythm. The music sounds like a sad person sounds. This is another way in which music can be said to be expressive of emotion and is an example of straightforward resemblance (depiction).

Davies' claim (iii) is again based on a crossover perceptual resemblance and it also assumes listeners' experiencing music metaphorically. Firstly, although in reality music moves only in time, we hear it in this case as if it were moving in space. In other words, we translate the aural patterns of movement into visual ones. Secondly, music is expressive of, say, joy because the ways in which its sounds 'move' are similar to the ways in which we observe happy people moving. Thus, in a joyful piece the musical elements, including tempo, harmony, rhythm and melody may move along in a sprightly dotted rhythm and at a lively tempo, at the same time as the melody is jumping between the notes of the tonic major chord and the harmonies are progressing in a straightforward, non-chromatic way. Listeners hearing a piece of music like this perceive the perceptual resemblances between aural patterns of 'movement' they *hear* in the music and the ways in which they *see* a joyful person moving, and in this way the music can be said to be expressive of emotion.

In the example above a listener hears the music 'moving' in ways that look like how a joyful person moves. Thus, aural patterns resemble visual patterns. There is a parallel account of how Davies' claim (iii) functions that is based on proprioception. It also involves a crossover resemblance. In this account a listener *hears* the music 'moving' in ways that *feel* like how the listener himself feels like moving when he is joyful. In this instance aural patterns resemble proprioceptive patterns and in this way too music can be said to be expressive of emotions.



Davies' claims enable us to understand how an abstract work of art may be expressive of emotion, and I employ his and similar claims below to show how gardens may be expressive of emotions. However, I, along with Davies, do not mean to claim that his theories amount to a conception of art, and they therefore do not need to be considered according to the criteria I have adopted for adequacy of conceptions of art.

Finally, in closing this section it is interesting to note that all three of Davies' claims concerning the expressiveness of art depend in their turn on a mimetic account of art. Either direct or crossover resemblance is necessary for each of his accounts of expressiveness to work.

## **Gardens**

From the early 19th century onwards the expression theory started to gain acceptance as the *de facto* philosophy of art, although it was not promulgated definitively as a philosophical conception until about 100 years later. The great artistic achievements of the 18th century landscape school typically did not fit within the expression theory at all but, nonetheless, they continued to be implemented and imitated well into the 19th century. This reluctance on the part of garden design to keep pace with changes in the other arts was surprising because it was only 50 years earlier that gardening had been heralded as an equal and true sister art of poetry and painting, and had been considered to be an art that was important, relevant and contemporary. At that time Horace Walpole had written, "Poetry, Painting, and Gardening, or the Science of Landscape, will forever by men of Taste be deemed Three Sisters, or The Three New Graces who dress and adorn Nature."<sup>1</sup> Clearly, the sister arts were now moving on and leaving gardens behind. There are some who argue that they have never caught up and that gardens are in fact no longer able to be 'fully contemporary' arts. However this point of view is not universally held.<sup>2</sup> I

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<sup>1</sup> Ross *op. cit.* p. 49

<sup>2</sup> Conan (2005) pp. 3-15

examine this issue further in chapter three, during my discussion of the institutional theory. However, I can propose now two contemporary reasons why gardens did not pursue the goals of the expression theory.

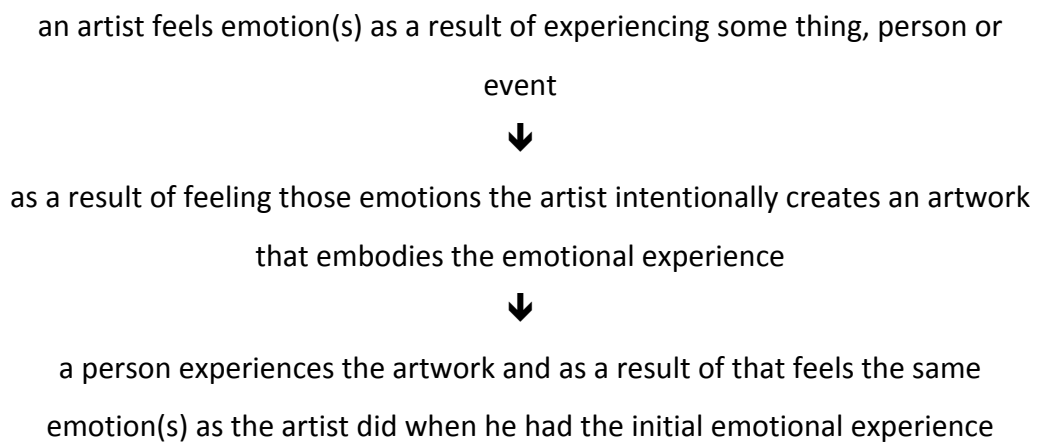
Firstly, gardens failed to become fashionable as vehicles for 19th century, romantic artists because it was generally not possible for an artist to create her own landscape garden, and those were the only gardens regarded as art. To create a landscape garden you needed a wealthy patron or to be a seriously committed and wealthy gardener, neither of which possibility appealed to the typical romantic artist. By comparison, being a romantic painter, poet or composer was straightforward: all you needed was ideas and a garret!

The second reason why gardens were left behind by their sister arts in Britain was the extraordinary increase in different plant materials that became available there as the century progressed. The increasing ease of travel, and an increase in the number of educated, curious and wealthy members of the middle and upper classes who had an interest in botany, resulted in many major plant-hunting expeditions being undertaken to Asia and the Americas. The plants these expeditions introduced to Britain, coupled with the technological advances exemplified in the Crystal Palace, lead understandably to a preference for, and interest in, individual plants, and especially novel, exotic flowering plants. This preference came at the expense of the overall effectiveness and meanings of the *arrangements* of plants and other garden elements. What plants were and looked like *per se* became more important than how and to what ends they were deployed in a garden.

The two reasons given above suggest contemporary reasons why gardens did not become expressive arts during the romantic period. However, it is reasonable to claim also that the expression theory as an art concept does not comfortably accommodate gardens at all. The misfit between gardens as works of art and the expression theory will be examined in detail below because it provides useful additional information about the nature of gardens and about

the fit between gardens and art conceptions generally. However, it is important to note that none of the difficulties I consider below implies that gardens cannot be *expressive* of emotion in the manner described in the previous section with respect to music and other abstract arts. I examine the garden's potential for this type of expressiveness later in this section.

In its typical formulation the expression theory requires a progression and direct links that can be shown this way:



The process outlined above is narrowly defined and offers little flexibility at any stage. Because of this it presents particular difficulties for some arts, for example architecture, but for none more so than gardens.

In the first place, when compared to other arts, making gardens is an unruly artistic endeavour. Consider some of the following complexities related to their creation, any one of which may sabotage the process described above: gardens often take years to install and usually the design process continues in tandem with the installation; a garden designer often lacks control over the living elements of her design and the layout of those elements and she lacks any control over the ultimate performance of those elements; garden design is often a collaborative effort, not only between a team of designers, but between designers, gardeners, owners, stonemasons, etc.; gardens change and evolve constantly so, if they are expressive of a creator's emotions, how can they

express different things at different times? These complexities are not confined to gardens. They are shared by other, paradigmatic arts. For example, operatic performances and movie making require a multidisciplinary design team, many exterior installations and kinetic sculptures are subject to change by wind, sun and so on, and musical and dramatic performances with an improvisatory component are 'designed' as they go along and are, furthermore, designed jointly by the performers and the original writer, if there is one.

Secondly, gardens appeal to all the senses. This does not disqualify them from being art because many paradigmatic arts, including opera, sculpture and installation art appeal in significant ways to more than one sense. However, gardens, and to a lesser degree installations, are unusual in that they appeal to the five senses and the vestibular sense too. The vestibular sense is particularly important to the way we experience gardens and it plays a role in our experience of architecture also. It is through this sense that we have an understanding of how and where we are located in space relative to other objects and ourselves at other times. Standing on edges of cliffs or high terraces or striding down sloping lawns or moving ever closer to a tree are experiences that we have by way of this sense.

Although gardens are primarily a visual art, a garden visitor may choose, albeit unconsciously, how to be affected by a garden. For example, a visitor may be hot from the sun and the reflected heat of a stone wall, may be a little anxious because he is standing on the abrupt edge of a belvedere, may be delighted by the sunset he is witnessing (outside the garden) and the sounds of birds (inside and outside the garden), may be smelling lilac and eating an apple from elsewhere in the garden. In such circumstances how should an initiated visitor behave so as to have the 'proper' garden experience and thereby feel the emotion embodied by the garden's creator? Which sensory organ is the true receptor for the emotion that the creator intended to communicate and intended the visitor to feel?

The issues gardens raise concerning 'proper' experience of art are common to many arts but are particularly pertinent in the case of gardens. Similarly, the issues gardens raise by virtue of their multi-sensory nature are shared by all the multi-sensory arts, but are highlighted in the case of gardens.

Thirdly, most gardens considered to be works of art are big and spatially complex and all gardens have indistinct experiential, if not physical boundaries. This does not disqualify them from being works of art because similar qualities are shared to varying degrees by other arts, including architecture and installation and environmental art. In gardens we are free to select how, how much, when and in what order we experience gardens' elements and are free to decide whether, say, a view of the sea or trees beyond a garden's fence comprises part of that garden. Gardens also often contain gardens-within-gardens ('garden rooms') and gardens are open to being experienced fully or in part, either as a whole or as a series of unrelated, separate episodes. Taking all the above into account, then, perhaps the best we can say is that a garden may express a whole lot of different, perhaps even conflicting emotions. But this is a problem for the classical expression theory. That theory evolved partially in response to the burgeoning production of small scale works of art such as the *lied*, the lyric poem, domestically scaled paintings and short, intimate piano pieces, all of which could easily be pervaded by one emotional mood and, moreover, could clearly be the unassisted expressive work of a single, identifiable agent, who sometimes was also the performer of the work. Contemporary gardens were not like this and visitors, intuitively, did not expect them to be so.

I have provided several reasons above to demonstrate how the classical expression theory does not accommodate gardens. However, as I have already noted with regard to Davies' theories on music, this does not necessarily entail that arts, and especially abstract arts, cannot be *expressive* of emotions. Gardens, while they often contain depictive elements such as statues and inscriptions, are essentially abstract works of art. I will now examine ways in

which the theories of expressiveness that Davies and others have proposed may be applied to the case of gardens.

I begin by restating Davies' claims. He states that music can express emotions because (i) its structure may mirror the dynamics of the structure of the physiology of emotions or because (ii) it can resemble human vocal utterance or because (iii) music's movement may mirror human comportment and behaviour.<sup>1</sup> With the exception of (ii), Davies' claims may be valid for gardens. For example, a garden composed entirely of flowing lines of yellow flowers separated by flowing lines of green grass may be experienced by a viewer as being expressive of different emotions from those a garden of the same materials organized entirely in squares may be expressive of, and that difference in experience may be related to the matters Davies raises in (i) and (iii) above. Similar claims might be mounted not only for the way different coloured plants are organized in a garden but also for colours themselves and for any other garden elements and the way(s) in which they are organized. Thus, rectangular beds of black tulips may be said to be expressive of sadness or grief and to do so differently from the way a single weeping willow in an empty field may be expressive of sadness or grief. Associations between plants and emotions are not new and have been made and codified since Roman times. However, the traditional associations between, say, rosemary and remembrance and between red roses and love are not made on the basis of the claims of philosophers like Davies. They are made on the basis of pictorial and literary associations drawn from history, mythology and the arts and are examples of indirect (symbolic) representation.

The art critic and historian Ernst Gombrich and the composer Alexander Scriabin preceded Davies *et al.*, but their claims outstripped the more modest claims of their successors. Scriabin believed each major and minor key was of a particular colour and Gombrich went so far as to claim that, "Every colour, sound or shape

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<sup>1</sup> Davies *op. cit.*

has a natural feeling tone just as every feeling has an equivalence in the world of sight and sound.”<sup>1</sup> As examples of colours Gombrich offered: “Among colours, red, being brighter than blue, will easily be experienced as the equivalent of warmth and cheerfulness, blue of cold and sadness.”<sup>2</sup>

To the extent that Davies and Gombrich are correct, gardens could be said to be expressive of particular emotions even though they are abstract works of art. According to their theories, gardens can be expressive of emotions not because they are able to represent object or events that might commonly cause particular emotions to arise but because they are expressive of the particular emotions themselves. And they do this because gardens’ elements may be organized in a way that is structurally similar to the ways in which humans experience emotions physiologically or because the elements themselves and the way they are organized reflect the ways in which humans behave when they experience particular emotions.

I will now introduce two further issues relating to gardens as expressive works of art. The first issue relates to the nature of gardens, the second to the capabilities of gardens and other works of art, and to Davies’ theories. Firstly, even though gardens may be expressive of emotions, they remain abstract works of art. However, at the same time as they are abstract they are tangible and real. They are our actual environment and we move in and through them physically in the same way we move through, say, a farm or a shopping mall. In this sense the degree of separation that usually exists between the real and the abstract is blurred and hence the ability of the garden, which is our actual physical surroundings, to be an expressive work of art is potentially compromised.

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<sup>1</sup> Gombrich (1962) p. 219

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 219

Secondly, if it is accepted that gardens can be expressive of emotions then, like other abstract works of art, they cannot be expressive of a large number of emotions that the representational, and especially the literary arts, have no trouble in expressing. Although irony is possible in a garden it does not seem possible or likely that a garden could or would be designed to be expressive of disgust or hate. And Miller goes so far as to claim that gardens have “an inability to express [any] negation”,<sup>1</sup> which, in her terms, presumably includes any negative emotion at all. Davies claims that music can express only the so-called Platonic emotions. Although it is not clear exactly where Davies draws a line, Stecker claims Davies means by this “emotions... [that] are all states capable of occurring without objects and are all variations of happiness or sadness.”<sup>2</sup> It is reasonable then to think that Davies would argue that because gardens do not usually represent objects, events or people they are unable to be expressive of emotions, and especially particular emotions, relating to objects, persons or events and that they are therefore limited to expressing the emotions he classifies as Platonic. However, perhaps a case could be made asserting that gardens can, in some circumstances, be expressive of non-Platonic emotions too. I have described earlier how the gardens at Versailles metaphorically represent absolute power. Perhaps they could be equally well described as celebrating the triumph of absolute power?

In conclusion, the classical expression theory of art has been shown above to be inadequate as a conception of art. It has struggled to accommodate abstract art, including some music, and many large-scale and multi-media works, whether abstract or representational. This has lead philosophers, including Davies and Kivy, to develop arguments to expand the conception to explain how abstract arts may be expressive of emotions. This development of the expression theory has turned out to be particularly useful for understanding paradigmatic abstract arts and the ways in which they convey meanings. Some

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<sup>1</sup> Miller *op. cit.* p. 178

<sup>2</sup> Stecker (1999) p. 275



gardens are also abstract works of art that are expressive of emotions. However, this is not an essential element or a distinctive aspect of gardens, nor does it provide adequate reason for valuing them. Moreover, being expressive of emotions does not provide adequate grounds for identifying gardens as works of art. Nonetheless, we value gardens for this property just as we do paradigmatic works of art. Therefore, on these grounds, there is no good reason why some gardens should not be considered works of art.

There remains one suggestion to consider about how gardens might stimulate particular emotions in a viewer. The philosopher Arnold Berleant suggests that in gardens, cultures and individuals (artists) may create their ideal nature, or present nature and the cultural values attending it in a concentrated format.<sup>1</sup> This is an idea worth pursuing in connection with the expression theory because perhaps what is unique about gardens is that they can afford opportunities for a structured experience of, and encounter with, nature, and within those opportunities lies the further opportunity for experiencing the culturally appropriate emotional reactions to natural elements and processes exhibiting beauty, the sublime and the agreeable. This does not explain how gardens may be expressive of their creators' emotions but it does offer a framework for considering that gardens might be able, by being expressive of a culture's values, to encourage the experience of certain common emotions.

Perhaps Berleant's idea can be extended further than he takes it. For example, the Muslim paradise gardens offer a depiction of paradise rather than a structured view of nature, but, like Berleant's 'nature' gardens, these paradise gardens may also stimulate in the initiated visitor the culturally appropriate emotions attached by the culture to the idea of paradise.

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<sup>1</sup> Berleant (2002a) (2002b) (2007)

### **3 Conceptions of Art – Modernism and the Institutional Theory**

#### ***Modernism***

##### **Conception of Art**

Modernism eventually succeeded the expression theory as the dominant conception of art for its time although both conceptions co-existed well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Art of the type that modernism set out to explain and justify began appearing at the end of the 19th century. The arts that most needed justifying were the visual arts and it is not surprising that theorizing began with reference to that body of work. Music, and to a lesser extent dance, had always been abstract, and although they provoked dismay and outrage to the degree that they abandoned traditional melody, rhythm, and harmony in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, that abandonment may be said to have changed only the way music sounded and dance looked. Music was still recognizably music and dance still dance, just. However, when the visual arts became non-representational, new theories became essential to explain and justify the practice. The expression theory had been the preceding conception but it was underpinned, at least in the visual arts, by a continuing reliance on mimesis in even the most expressive works of art. In the visual arts of the 19th century emotion had been understood to be expressed through the depiction of recognizable people, objects and events. Once the visual arts gave away representation a new rationale for their existence needed to be sought. That rationale was supplied by the modernist conception, or at least by one strand of it.

Like its predecessor, modernism was not a single, homogenous conception of art. It had two main strands: art for art's sake (autonomous modernism) and art for society's sake (engaged modernism). Autonomous modernism claimed that art was self referential and that its value was independent of, and as important as, other values, such as truth or justice. Art of this type often set out to be subversive of earlier art traditions, styles and techniques while still aspiring to be expressive of beauty or the sublime, and innovation and originality were

important artistic values. Very often the art was abstract, i.e. non-representational. Any representational or narrative content such works did exhibit was deemed to be irrelevant and disinterested contemplation was required. A work's formal features and qualities were held to be the appropriate object of aesthetic attention and they were a source of the aesthetic experience, which was in its turn deemed to be valuable. According to Bell's version of this conception, which I discuss below, form was essential to art and therefore, because I have already defined gardens as *purposeful arrangements* of natural objects, this conception might be assumed to accommodate gardens comfortably. I investigate this assumption later in this section.

The second strand of modernism was engaged modernism. In the conception offered by this strand of modernism autonomy was also important. Engaged autonomous art was art that was independent of existing social and political power structures and it was understood to be valuable in part because it was able to criticize and subvert those same social and political structures. Such art was more likely to have representational or narrative content rather than to be abstract and it did not recommend that those who looked at, read or listened to it be disinterested. Autonomous art of this sort aimed to engage its audience both imaginatively and emotionally. Modernist gardens were typically not modernist in the engaged sense, although arguments could possibly be mounted for gardens of other periods, such as Victorian public parks and the ecologically pure gardens of today being so. Therefore, the discussion of modernism that follows will concentrate on modernism as autonomous and disengaged.

Unless I specify otherwise, when I refer below to autonomous modernism I am referring to the modernist conception of Clive Bell. I discuss his conception in detail later in this section, when I also briefly discuss the conceptions of Clement Greenberg and Munroe Beardsley and introduce the philosophy of Susanne Langer.

Autonomous modernism conceived of the essence of art as being related to a work's formal composition. According to this conception an artist created a work not to represent anything or to express her or someone else's emotion: she created a work in order to produce something that exhibited form and, according to Bell and his followers, *significant* form. Exhibiting significant form was both a necessary and a sufficient condition for something's being a work of art. Any emotional or representational content a work may have was not only irrelevant but was strictly to be ignored when assessing a work's significant form and, therefore, its value as art. A work of art was held to be valuable on this account because it offered the opportunity for a viewer to undergo an aesthetic experience, which experience was in turn held to be intrinsically valuable.

A pioneering precursor to these particular modernist views was Eduard Hanslick, whose *Concerning the Beautiful in Music*<sup>1</sup> had appeared in 1854, at the height of the romantic period. He was conservative in his musical tastes and in that book he defended music as an abstract art, an art whose content was unable to be anything other than self-referential. Since music was abstract, he argued, it was unable to express anything except itself. However, as no other contemporary fine art was, or was regarded as, abstract his views remained confined to music and hence Hanslick's influence on the non-musical art world was not great.

What came to be known as formalism found a much more influential apologist over half a century later in Clive Bell.<sup>2</sup> Bell developed his prescriptive views primarily in relation to contemporary painting but his philosophy of art came to be applied across all the arts. It was a conception for its time. Building on Hanslick's earlier work, and supported by Kant's philosophy, he went some way

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<sup>1</sup> Hanslick (1957)

<sup>2</sup> Bell (1986)

towards explaining the power of the large body of abstract music produced during the classical and romantic periods, but, much more importantly, he offered a way of understanding and was an apologist for the increasingly non-representational contemporary visual arts. For a public and for aestheticians moving step by step away from representation and towards abstraction, the formalist conception was a plausible alternative to earlier conceptions on which to explain, criticize and experience the new works. It was soon extrapolated from music and painting to cover all the arts, with functionalism becoming a central tenet of 20<sup>th</sup> century architecture.

This conception set out to champion the art it fostered in a way that the expression theory had not. Philosophical presentations of the expression theory did not occur until that conception's heyday was all but over whereas modernism was espoused as a conception only ten or so years after Croce and Tolstoy were writing their important theoretical contributions. The expression theory was explaining what had been going on for over a century. The modernist conception was explaining what had been happening in the previous ten years only. And this close temporal relationship between the vanguard of arts and philosophical aesthetics continues to the present day.

Bell's conception did offer a framework for understanding and justifying some of the abstract arts of its time. However, its usefulness in these roles was undermined by the circularity of its underlying claims. Bell claimed (a) that significant form is what art possesses, (b) that significant form is what triggers the aesthetic emotion in the viewer and (c) that the aesthetic emotion is that which is triggered by significant form. Based on this we can't pin down art, significant form or the aesthetic emotion.

However, even leaving aside its circular logic, Bell's conception is not adequate. Formal features may be an aesthetically valuable property of some works of art but they may also be valuable properties of objects that are not works of art. Moreover, although some works of art may exhibit aesthetically pleasing formal

features this does not entail that exhibiting form, and in particular significant form, is an essential aspect of art, nor one that necessarily results in a valuable aesthetic experience. All art does not exhibit significant form and therefore the conception fails to satisfy the identity criterion. Furthermore, a paradigmatic work of art such as Boulez' *Second Piano Sonata*, which is constructed in accordance with probability theory, cannot exhibit significant form and therefore it cannot be art or, as art, valuable. On these grounds the conception fails to meet the inclusion criterion also. Finally, the conception's narrow view, which requires that significant form be appreciated in a work while representational, narrative and emotional content are ignored, is also unacceptable. An understanding of, say, Mantegna's *St. Sebastian*, Britten's *War Requiem*, Melville's *Moby Dick* or Hotere's *Sangro* paintings as significant form only appears unjustifiably narrow and as missing the point of the works.

There were others following on from Bell who agreed that formal considerations were paramount in a work of art but allowed at the same time that form, while it was a defining characteristic of art, was not an end in itself and that it represented symbolically something else. One such philosopher was Susanne Langer, who was active from the 1950's onwards. She developed a comprehensive general theory of art that she elaborated extensively with regard to many of the individual fine arts. Her philosophy of art was presented initially in *Feeling and Form*<sup>1</sup> and *Philosophy in a New Key*<sup>2</sup>. For Langer, the arts were a fundamentally important and valuable human activity. The ideas that art might refer only to itself or that art might be merely beautiful were, to her, counter-intuitive. Her theories will be discussed in some detail later and her idea of how music functions will underpin a theory to be introduced in connection with gardens.

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<sup>1</sup> Langer (1953)

<sup>2</sup> Langer (1957)

Others prominent in the field also produced their own modernist conceptions. Art critic Clement Greenberg and philosopher Monroe Beardsley both developed conceptions of autonomous modernism in which aesthetic qualities and value were dependent on the formal qualities of works. Greenberg<sup>1</sup>, like Bell before him, developed his theory mainly in response to the abstract visual arts. He agreed with Bell that art was self-referential, non-contextual and independent and that the art object itself was of primary importance. He claimed that any art had an essential nature and that painting's was painted two dimensional surfaces. He believed that art was to be valued to the degree that it showed originality and evolved and actualized new versions and forms of its essential nature. In the case of paintings these advances in technique and form were to be evident through the ways in which paint was applied to a two dimensional canvas or similar flat surface. In arguing for originality, however, he exposed a flaw in his theory. If a valuable work of art is one that exhibits originality then art cannot be independent because originality can only be assessed in the context of the art that has preceded it. In this way, for Greenberg, art turns out to be dependent after all.

Beardsley<sup>2</sup> also believed in the primacy and independence of the art object. He believed that aesthetic experience is valuable and that a work of art is a functional object whose task is to stimulate an aesthetic experience in a viewer. He defined a work of art as "...an arrangement of conditions intended to be capable of affording an experience with marked aesthetic character...".<sup>3</sup> Beardsley allowed that an aesthetic object can have many presentations and this was particularly important for his discussion of performances and other arts that exhibit change.

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<sup>1</sup> Greenberg (1978a)

<sup>2</sup> Beardsley (1981)

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 299.

Greenberg's and Beardsley's conceptions highlight important aspects and features of, as well as reasons for valuing, art. Greenberg claims that art is autonomous, independent and self referential, and that, by exhibiting novelty and originality, it provides an aesthetic experience which, in turn, provides a reason for our valuing it. Beardsley claims that art exists to provide aesthetic experience and is for this reason valuable. However, both these conceptions are inadequate. They do not provide the means to distinguish between art and non-art and nor do they include all paradigmatic works of art. All art is not autonomous, or novel and original. Consider the stained glass windows at Chartres Cathedral. Similarly, all art is not created to be, or to be experienced as, an aesthetic object. For example, Bach composed his *Goldberg Variations* because it was his job to provide what his patron wanted, and in that instance his patron wanted something to cure his insomnia. Consequently, these conceptions fail to meet both the identity and the inclusion criteria for adequacy.

## **Gardens**

I have already referred to the circularity of Bell's formulation of modernism and it causes problems for discussing any work of art in terms of his conception. However, for now, let us assume that we know, to a degree that allows us to consider whether it might or might not be a feature of gardens, what significant form might be.

A clarification is needed at this point regarding two terms frequently used to describe different styles of gardens. Gardens are commonly described as being formal or informal. In this sense, a garden's being formal or informal tends to be shorthand for describing a garden's layout, plant range and planting style. Thus, when a garden is described as being formal what is often meant is that that garden's elements, as seen in plan form, are geometric rather than curvilinear in layout, that there is likely to be spatial repetition, (bilateral) symmetry and linear axes in the layout of the garden's elements, and that the garden's internal and external edges may be clearly defined. A garden described as formal may



also be likely to employ a limited palette of plants, to dispose them *en bloc* in the patterns just described and perhaps also to treat its plants in unnatural ways by means of pruning, shaping and otherwise directing their growth. By contrast, if gardens are described as informal they are more likely to be curvilinear than geometric in plan form and there is less likely to be less bilateral symmetry. An informal garden is also more likely to merge into its setting and it may well appear to dispose its plants more artlessly.

Significant form for Bell had nothing to do with formality as just described. Any work, no matter how 'formal' or 'informal' was capable of exhibiting significant form. For him form was an outcome of the way colours, shapes and textures and other elements were combined in a work. Such form was not to be prejudged by a work's being so-called 'formal' or 'informal'. For Bell, a work could theoretically be highly 'formal' and yet not possess significant form and equally a work could appear 'informal' yet still possess a high degree of significant form.

Three issues need to be raised concerning gardens and significant form. The first issue has already been noted above in connection with all the arts but it bears repeating: if significant form is to be the sole criterion for artistic appreciation of a garden then so much of gardens' repertoires of meanings and value must in that way be ignored.

Secondly, although Bell is of no help on the matter, the perception of significant form in a garden would seem to assume that there is a way in which the garden's individual elements cohere to produce the significant form(s) that a viewer recognizes. Because a garden's elements are perpetually changing chronologically, diurnally and seasonally, as well as aging, dying and regenerating, does this mean that there is an infinite number of significant forms that a garden may have, or does it mean that there is just one, infinitely accommodating significant form? Seen in this light the conception appears inadequate to the case of gardens. Although it may be possible to claim that a

garden like the famous rock and sand garden in Ryōan-ji Temple has a constant, singular significant form, gardens are not typically like that. Accordingly, the assumption I referred to earlier, that autonomous modernism would accommodate gardens because they are purposeful arrangements of objects, is shown to be wrong.

Bell does not seriously attempt to apply his aesthetic theory to the temporal arts. Indeed he writes of music: "I do not understand music well.... I find musical form exceedingly difficult to apprehend, ... My opinion about music is not worth having."<sup>1</sup> And perhaps it is this lack of interest in music that allowed him not to take a logical next step and develop a dynamic version of his theory of significant form such that might, in his terms, adequately encompass music, the other temporal arts, and gardens.

Thirdly, an important objection to significant form as a framework for appreciating gardens is that Bell does not allow that anything of a work's representational content is admissible when a work of art is being assessed. Hence, the fact that a clump of trees in a Capability Brown landscape is just that, a clump of trees, and not say something that looks like a clump of trees but is in fact made out of wrecked car bodies, is irrelevant. Similarly, a pear tree in an enclosed monastery garden is not to be recognized for its beauty, fecundity or any symbolic meaning it might have but simply for its contribution to significant form. Kant might be seen to agree when he says, "A product of fine art must be recognized to be art and not nature."<sup>2</sup> However, herein lies an issue that is distinctive about gardens as an art form: gardens use real objects, even growing objects, as their materials and in this they are unique.

In summary, autonomous, disengaged modernism as conceived of by Bell was a useful, though inadequate, conception for the abstract visual arts it was seeking

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<sup>1</sup> Dutton (undated)

<sup>2</sup> Kant (2007) section 45: 135

to justify. Gardens are abstract visual arts and you would expect them to be accommodated by the conception. Similarly, gardens are, by the definition I have adopted, purposeful arrangements of natural objects and, therefore, form is central to them. For this reason too you would expect autonomous modernism to be adequate to accommodating gardens. However, Bell's conception of significant form was non-dynamic and was therefore inadequate to the task of accommodating gardens, which by the nature of their materials must change constantly. The particular way in which gardens change over time is essential to, and distinctive, of them. I discuss this feature of gardens in detail later, in chapter five.

I referred above to the conceptions of Greenberg and Beardsley. Their conceptions did not rely on the notion of significant form and do not necessarily exclude gardens. Greenberg's modernist theory allows in part that gardens may be works of art, and valuable, to the degree that they are technically and formally original and innovative in their essential nature. I have already claimed that gardens have an essential nature. I agree with Greenberg that paintings' essential nature is two-dimensional and sculpture's three dimensional. My further claim is that gardens' essential nature is four-dimensional, and that gardens share this with dance. Gardens, therefore, because they have an essential nature, have an appropriate means whereby they can demonstrate their originality and innovativeness. A paradigmatic art garden such as Jencks' and Keswick's *Garden of Cosmic Speculation* in Scotland amply displays technical and formal originality and innovation in the ways in which its organic and inorganic elements and the whole garden exist in four dimensions and change constantly over time. Greenberg would therefore agree that it could be valuable. However, he would have trouble accepting it as a work of art because it is clearly not non-referential, nor independent of the scientific, mathematical and architectural milieu in which it was formed. Furthermore, gardens, whether they are considered art gardens or not, cannot be independent of their physical and social milieux in the way that Greenberg says works of art should be.

Beardsley<sup>1</sup> also believes in the primacy and independence of the art object, and that art exists to function to provide aesthetic experience. Gardens have long been considered objects that offer aesthetic experience. A paradigmatic art garden, such as Monet's garden at Giverny, is clearly an arrangement of 'conditions' capable of affording an aesthetic experience and Beardsley would therefore agree that it could be valuable. However, the changeability of the garden at Giverny and the infinite numbers of ways in which it may be fully or partially explored present challenges for Beardsley's theory of an independent, functional aesthetic object. Although Beardsley allowed that aesthetic objects, including performances, can exist in multiple 'presentations', I believe that the constant mutability that is an everyday feature of most gardens, and to which we direct aesthetic attention, and from which we derive aesthetic pleasure, is not something his conception is designed to, or able to accommodate adequately.

Finally, to the extent that 'significant form' can be tied down, Bell's conception, and those of Greenberg and Beardsley, all draw our attention to important and valuable features and aspects of some works of art. Works of art can be formally interesting and pleasing, novel and original, and they can stimulate aesthetic experiences for a viewer. However none of these features and qualities is an essential element or distinctive aspect of gardens. Furthermore they do not provide adequate reasons for valuing gardens and nor does exhibiting them provide adequate ground for identifying gardens as works of art. However, all these features and qualities are to be found in some paradigmatic works of art and we value those works because they possess them. These same features and qualities are also to be found in some gardens and this supplies an additional reason to claim that the exclusion of gardens from the category of art is unjustified.

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<sup>1</sup> Beardsley (1981)

## ***The Institutional Theory***

### **Conception of Art**

All the art conceptions already discussed continue to play some role in our understanding of art today. However, they all started to come under increasing pressure from about 1920 onwards as they were faced with a steady flow of objects and performances that they were unable to accommodate. A new conception was needed in the face of a range of new and difficult objects and performances, some of which appeared to be not only not art but to be anti-art. *Objets trouvés* and other products of Dadaism and aleatoric art, for example, all proved difficult not only for the person in the street but also for the art public, art institutions, funding agencies and philosophers. More controversial still was the practice of conceptual art, which typically featured no art object at all. Locally, works such as composer John Cousins' 1984 *Membrane*, during which he manipulates the flow of his own urine, or installations like those of the *et al.* collective, stretched the modernist aesthetic and its definitions to breaking point. Although the autonomous modernist conception encouraged subversive innovation, it still valued significant form and supported the notion that art stood apart from 'real' life and was self-referential in terms of meaning.<sup>1</sup> While it is true that objects and performances in the genres just cited were often self-referential and could be sometimes seen to have significant form, clearly art was changing fast and traditional notions of form, beauty and other aesthetic qualities were being seriously challenged. In response to this state of affairs new theories of art were proposed, prominent among which was the institutional conception, usually known as the institutional theory.

This theory was promulgated primarily by Arthur Danto and George Dickie. My discussion focuses primarily on Dickie's version of the theory but I begin with a brief account of Danto's version. Danto coined the term 'artworld', by which he

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<sup>1</sup> Greenberg (1978a), (1978b)

meant “an atmosphere of art theory”.<sup>1</sup> He saw art history as analogous to scientific enquiry and works of art as theoretical entities. He believed that, just as in science, new products and new ways of thinking put pressure on old conceptions and ways of thinking about art and ultimately forced a revolution like, say, the Copernican Revolution in science. The result was revised or new theories of art that accommodated the previously problematic products and ways of thinking. Art objects and theories were mutually dependent, and were individually and collectively open to change and continual revision by members of The Artworld. The important distinguishing clause in his definition of art states that something is art if and only if “... the work in question and the interpretations thereof require an art historical context.”<sup>2</sup> This means that something is art only if members of The Artworld think it is. The Artworld thinks an object is art because some of its members understand that the object in question belongs to, interacts with, or can be understood and appreciated in the light of preceding art practices and the theories and writings those practices have elicited. New ‘art’ that does not fit may become a member of the category when there is sufficient pressure, weight of evidence or momentum for it to be noticed and considered as such. Then it becomes part of an enlarged theoretical category called ‘art’.

There have been objections to Danto’s theory. For example, some say that it allows that art criticism written with some literary style could be deemed to be art. Others claim it is inadequate because it allows an object to be art at one time, then not to be art at another time, and then for it to be art again at yet another time, and so on, depending on how the object can be accommodated by current theoretical art discourses. However, in theory, Danto’s conception has no problem accommodating gardens and in this way the conception could be adequate to the case of gardens. But, for reasons I will discuss below in connection with Dickie, Danto’s art world has generally not been interested in

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<sup>1</sup> Adajian (2008)

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

gardens and therefore, by his criteria, they are not art, or at least not at this time.

Dickie's 1985 version of the institutional theory is summarized by Hepburn as claiming "the unifying factor [of art is] ... not the possession of common perceptual... features by artworks, but the conferral on certain objects, by representatives of the 'artworld', of the status of 'candidate for appreciation' as works of art".<sup>1</sup> Dickie's definition is procedural: just as a rule becomes law when it has gone through the appropriate procedures so too an object, person or event becomes art when it has gone through appropriate procedures. In this way art is not expected to possess or exhibit any characteristic perceptual features or qualities and therefore *any* object, process or person is a potential artwork. An actual artwork exists not because of features it possesses but because it is treated in a particular by a member or members of the particular social systems known as The Artworld, and that treatment alone is a necessary and sufficient condition for something's being a work of art. This theory is radically different from the mimetic, expression and modernist conceptions discussed above, all of which required the art object to have particular perceptual features, in respect of the possession of which the object could be identified and valued as art. It is also different from Danto's theory. Danto required that members of The Artworld *think* about art in agreed ways and this enabled them to classify something as art. Dickie offers procedures. He requires that members of The Artworld *do* something about art, that they follow certain procedures as a result of which an object becomes art. However, the procedures that need to be followed to designate something a work of art and the membership of the designating groups are ill defined.

Dickie's institutional theory supplied a straightforward classificatory definition of art. By this definition anything can be art if it is presented for appreciation by The Artworld. The attractiveness of the definition lay in its ability to cover all the

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<sup>1</sup> Hepburn (1992) p. 425

“anxious objects”<sup>1</sup> whose status as art objects was in doubt. Dickie considered that the theory’s inability to describe what qualities and characteristics we might expect art objects to possess, to clarify what art’s essence might be or what functions it might have and to explain why art might be valuable for us, were all strengths of his theory.

The institutional theory is so inclusive that theoretically any thing can be art and therefore, unlike mimesis, the expression theory and autonomous modernism, the institutional theory does not claim that art has an essential intrinsic and/or perceptual nature, other than its being the product of procedures. Neither does it propose reasons why art may be valuable. According to the two criteria I have adopted, the institutional theory is inadequate as a conception and definition of art. Within limits the theory does allow us to identify art: art is an object, person or event that has gone through certain procedures. However, the details of the procedures are ill defined, especially when compared to, say, the procedures required to change a rule into law. Moreover, the requirements for membership of the procedural body, i.e. The Artworld, are equally vague. Therefore, the usefulness of the definition for identifying works of art is limited. Its imprecision in setting out procedures and identifying personnel also results in some paradigmatic works of art being excluded by the definition. For example, works that belong to paradigmatic art forms but are produced in societies lacking an artworld are excluded from the category of art unless they are appropriated by The Artworld. Similarly, in societies with an artworld, some paradigmatic works of art, including some gardens, are excluded because they have not undergone the appropriate procedures. This weakness of the conception has particular significance for gardens because they have not generally enjoyed the attention of The Artworld. I discuss this in more detail below.

I have given reasons above to show that the institutional theory fails to meet the identification and the inclusion criteria. I have also noted that the

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<sup>1</sup> Rosenberg (1964)



conception lacks a normative component and therefore cannot explain any value that art may have. For that reason the conception will remain counter-intuitive as long as human ears can distinguish between *Snoopy's Christmas* and Bach's *St Matthew's Passion*.

The following literary anecdote may make a point and bring this section to a close on a lighter note. In his imaginative novel *Homesickness*<sup>1</sup>, which, incidentally, appeared several years before any promulgations of the institutional theory of which I am aware, Murray Bail locates a group of unsophisticated Australian tourists in a dusty, hot, primitive village. They are directed to visit the much vaunted, new museum and set off eagerly, expecting to see handicrafts and other 'ethnic' pieces. Instead, they are perplexed to find in the display cases a soda syphon, a pram and a flushing toilet cistern.

## **Gardens**

The all-inclusiveness of the institutional theory is very useful because it enables all manner of 'difficult' objects to be subsumed under the category of art. However, this particular strength of the conception is of little use where gardens are concerned because for the most part gardens have not been 'difficult'. Generally they have eschewed the avant-garde practices of the other arts and, consequently, they have often dropped below The Artworld's radar.

Miller claims that the garden is no longer an object of interest to the institutional theory's Artworld and therefore, in the terms of that theory, the garden is no longer art. She goes on to say that the theory does not allow for such demotion from art to non-art and therefore it "... suggests that the theory is inadequate to the task of differentiating works of art from non-works of art, [and] that the 'institutional' theory does not get at some crucial features which we seem to be employing ... in deciding what art is." <sup>2</sup> In other words, the

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<sup>1</sup> Bail (1980)

<sup>2</sup> Miller *op. cit.* p. 70

conclusion that gardens have never been art is intuitively and empirically untrue and therefore the conception is inadequate.

Miller's original statement, that the garden is no longer of interest to the The Artworld, is true only in a limited way. While it is the case that with a few celebrated exceptions, such as Schwartz's *Bagel Garden* (see *Figure Five* below), gardens have not been 'difficult', that is not to say that they have not been genuine artistic enterprises undertaken by genuine artists. A roll call that includes architects Le Corbusier, Christopher Tunnard, Richard Neutra, Charles Jencks, Thomas Church and Gunnar Asplund, filmmaker Derek Jarman, and garden designers Geoffrey Jellicoe, Roberto Burle Marx, Brenda Colvin, Russell Page, Martha Schwartz, and Richard Findlay Harrison clearly speaks of and to any artworld, as does surely the considerable interpretative attention paid to their works.



**Figure 5** Photograph of Martha Schwartz's notorious *Bagel Garden*.<sup>1</sup>

Ross<sup>2</sup>, too, agrees with Miller that the garden is no longer an object of interest to the art world, but her conclusion is different. She argues that as the 20<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [Online] Available from: <http://www.marthaschwartz.com/projects/bagelgarden.html> [Accessed 1 October 2011]

<sup>2</sup> Ross *op.cit.*

century progressed, gardens became irrelevant and obsolete and they were transmuted as an art form into environmental and land art in a way analogous to the replacement of stained glass and tapestry by oil painting in the late Middle Ages. Ross invokes Danto's theoretical historicism to support this claim: gardens are no longer relevant as would-be-art because they have been superseded by a superior medium that is more appropriate for the artistic statements and projects that artists want to make in our times.

This claim is neat and tidy but, as discussed above in connection with Miller's claim, it is invalid because garden art did not cease being made, experienced or interpreted during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Furthermore, land and environmental art may equally well be understood to be types of installation art rather than being transmutations of gardens, and this point will be explored later on.

It is true, however, that gardens have been slow to take up the causes of contemporary art. But it may be nearer the truth to say that gardens *should not* take up the fashionable intellectual currents of contemporary art. In his *Introduction: In Defiance of the Institutional Art World*, Michel Conan writes, "... garden art deserves scholarly scrutiny in its own right and should be studied in its own terms without any pretense at imitating critical discussions of the contemporary art world since it has remained alien to its critical discourse."<sup>1</sup>

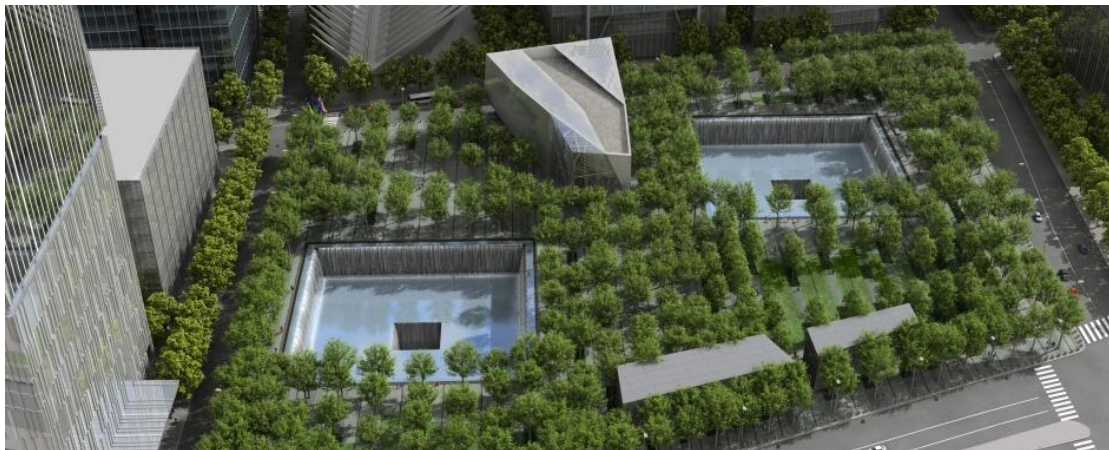
Conan's quotation seems to suggest that there may be a parallel artworld that is interested in gardens as art. Such a 'garden-artworld' was not envisaged by the institutional theory, but the existence of the gardens noted above, together with the critical attention paid to them in academic books, journals and teaching programmes, strongly suggest that a system similar to the one Dickie claimed for art does exist for gardens. Furthermore, the fact that some gardens, for example *The National September 11 Memorial* garden at Ground Zero in New York (see *Figure 6*, p. 60), are publically funded in the way that

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<sup>1</sup> Conan (2005) p. 3

sculpture and other public arts are funded is further evidence of gardens' being considered in the same way as other arts. Perhaps there is a case to be made that a 'garden-artworld' exists and that it is a sub-group of The Artworld, with membership and procedures similar to those of Dickie's artworld.

I discuss below some likely reasons for the lack of interest of contemporary philosophers and aestheticians in gardens. These reasons, some of which have already been referred to in connection with other conceptions, again highlight aspects of gardens' differences from the other arts - differences that explain why even the all-embracing institutional theory may not embrace gardens. This is not to say that the institutional theory could not accommodate gardens: the fact is simply that The Artworld's recent inhabitants and institutions have generally not seen gardens in this way. I have argued above that 20<sup>th</sup> century gardens have indeed been part of the world of art, but that phrase is not synonymous with 'artworld' and this is, perhaps, an indication of how restrictive the term 'artworld' can be.



**Figure 6** Aerial photograph of *The National September 11 Memorial* in New York City. <sup>1</sup>

There are six reasons for the lack of interest of contemporary philosophers and aestheticians in gardens. Firstly, gardens possess a high sensuous content and,

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<sup>1</sup> [Online] Available from: <http://www.911memorial.org/design-overview> [Accessed 3 October 2011]

supposedly, a low intellectual content. This is a reversal of what the contemporary art theorist expected of works of art and consequently gardens were neglected. Secondly, contemporary gardens continued to exhibit and represent a high degree of traditional aesthetic values which, given this was the time of “The End of Aesthetic Experience”<sup>1</sup>, were unfashionable. Thirdly, gardens were not amenable to being exhibited easily, or to being transported, reproduced as facsimiles or studied, and for these reasons too gardens were easily ignored by late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century aesthetics. Fourthly, gardens have always been comparatively expensive to make and maintain at a level commensurate with their being works of art. In the mid to late 20<sup>th</sup> century, as in earlier times, new serious gardens were the preserve of wealthy individuals only. This perceived elitism surrounding art gardens did not help to foster an interest among aestheticians and critics of the engaged modernist school, for some of whom the arts were seen as an opportunity to pursue egalitarian ideals, as existing to right social wrongs and to empower minority groups. Fifthly, gardens are not easily ironic or self-critical, and nor do they generally shock or confront viewers. This made them unlikely candidates for art status, part of the mandate for which was, according to the avant-garde, to shock, disturb and offend. Sixthly, a vicious circle operated. Because The Artworld did not take an interest in gardens, gardens continued not to be of interest to The Artworld. The Artworld’s procedures for conferring the status of art ignored gardens and Danto’s theory ignored them too. One reason for this lack of interest was that gardens are, by their very nature, difficult to delineate in space and time. They have an extremely high degree of mutability generally so that the whole project of pinning down a garden in order for a member of The Artworld to present it for consideration as an art work was fraught with complexity and difficulty. Hence it almost never happened, either for contemporary gardens or for historical gardens being presented in retrospect for consideration.

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<sup>1</sup> Shusterman (1997)

In summary, Dickie's institutional theory might be expected to accommodate gardens easily. However, gardens' profile has been low in The Artworld and that highlights an important inadequacy of the conception related to its procedures and membership. I have shown that some contemporary gardens share many of their qualities and features with works appropriated as art by The Artworld, and this is true of some historical gardens also. However, gardens have been ignored by Dickie's artworld, if not, perhaps, by a 'garden-artworld sub-committee'. Similarly, Danto's artworld has not been interested in gardens. The theories in which members of his artworld have been interested have, by and large, reflected the same sorts of concerns and priorities as those held by members of Dickie's artworld. Therefore, according to Danto's artworld too, gardens are not art, despite their sharing significant aesthetic and other features and qualities with contemporary and historical objects and events that The Artworld *has* appropriated as art.

## 4 Conceptions of Art – The Cluster Concept

### *Summary of Adequacy of Conceptions*

I have now examined four important conceptions of art in terms of their adequacy as conceptions. I have also examined how gardens might be accommodated under each of those conceptions.

Each art conception has proved inadequate for reasons already given, but each of the conceptions has also contributed an important insight about some works of art. With the possible exception of the institutional theory, the property or relation that has been 'difficult' for each conception to accommodate is a property or relation that many gardens have.

Plato's and Aristotle's mimetic conception excludes gardens because they generally do not represent directly. However, many gardens do represent symbolically. It is an important aspect of them and, just as is the case with paradigmatic arts such as poetry and painting, it can be a reason for valuing them, especially if it is done well.

The expression theory excludes gardens but gardens are expressive of emotions in an important way that is not accommodated by its classical version. Along with paradigmatic arts such as music and paintings, gardens can be expressive of emotion and this is often a reason for valuing them.

Bell's version of autonomous modernism excludes gardens insofar as the forms in which he was interested were non-dynamic. Form is essential to gardens because they are purposeful arrangements of natural objects. However, form in gardens is necessarily dynamic because gardens exist in four dimensions. Constant change, or at least the management of such change, is an essential and distinctive feature of gardens. This is so even in the case of apparently

static Japanese rock and gravel gardens, where constant grooming of the sand is required to resist change and therefore give an illusion of timelessness. With this counterexample, gardens are valued for the ways in which they change over time, just as music and the other temporal arts are.

Greenberg's modernist conception excludes gardens because, although they may be novel and original, they are generally not autonomous, self-referential, non-contextual and independent. By contrast, gardens are, 'real', inhabitable, physically dependent on the surrounding landscape and soil, dependent for part of their meaning on their relationship with the social and physical environs, and, moreover, they can be useful and productive. All these are important features of gardens and offer potential reasons for our valuing them. They are features which also, in varying degrees, are found in paradigmatic arts such as architecture and installations, where they provide reasons for our valuing those arts. Finally, gardens, and all other works of art, are excluded from being valuable works of art under Greenberg's conception because they cannot satisfy his paradoxical requirement that they be at once original and non-contextual.

Beardsley's modernist conception appears to include gardens because gardens can be "...an arrangement of conditions intended to be capable of affording an experience with marked aesthetic character...".<sup>1</sup> However, gardens and their materials change constantly, and in a way that is unique among the arts. Beardsley did not discuss gardens and, in my opinion, his notion of differing 'presentations' of a single work of art, does not, and was not designed to, accommodate gardens. I discuss the mutability of gardens in detail in the following chapter. At this point I simply restate that gardens are valued for the ways in which they change over time, just as music and the other temporal arts are.

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<sup>1</sup> Beardsley *op. cit.* p. 299.



Dickie's institutional theory excludes gardens because they are not aesthetically fashionable. It is true that gardens tend to be concerned with values such as sensuous pleasure, naturalness, beauty and peacefulness, but the corollary that features like these are likely to contribute to something's not being art seems counter-intuitive, to say the least. The loosely described procedures and membership criteria of Dickie's artworld, and the unstated biases that inform those procedures and membership criteria, are weaknesses of the institutional theory, and they deny gardens the status of a paradigmatic art that they enjoyed formerly.

Danto's institutional theory excludes gardens because art theory and theorists ignored them, probably, as in the case of Dickie's conception, on the grounds that they are not aesthetically fashionable. However, I have provided several examples that show that gardens ought not to have been ignored in this way. 'Art' gardens never stopped being produced, and it is a weakness of Danto's conception that, because gardens were unfashionable in his artworld, they were denied the status of a paradigmatic art that they had long enjoyed.

In summary, all four conceptions tell us important things about what art is and about how and why art has been and continues to be a valuable human endeavour and they all, albeit in modified forms, continue to have their champions. However, they all remain inadequate as conceptions and this has led Berys Gaut to develop what appears to be the only possible adequate conception of art.

### ***Art as a Cluster Concept***

#### **Conception of Art**

In 2000 Gaut suggested that art is a cluster concept and therefore cannot be defined in the traditional, Socratic way. This proposal is similar to Wittgenstein's suggestion that some concepts need to be understood in terms of family resemblances but does not have the problems following from the dependence

on 'family'. Gaut claimed that there are multiple criteria for the application of the cluster concept but that none of them is necessary.<sup>1</sup> Thus, there are only sufficient conditions. The presence of some of them is enough for an object or performance to qualify as a work of art. It is not clear how many are needed but some *must* be present. The cluster conception continues to have currency. It has been criticized, reviewed and modified by Gaut and others as recently as 2010.<sup>2</sup> It remains the most acceptable solution to the millennia old quest to define art.

Gaut proposed a list of ten criteria. (Others working along similar lines have proposed their own lists: Dutton<sup>3</sup> proposed twelve of his own criteria and Barwell<sup>4</sup> eleven.) Gaut's criteria are:

*(i) possessing positive aesthetic qualities...; (ii) being expressive of emotion; (iii) being intellectually challenging; (iv) being formally complex and coherent; (v) having a capacity to convey complex meanings; (vi) exhibiting an individual point of view; (vii) being an exercise of creative imagination; (viii) being an artefact or performance that is the product of a high degree of skill; (ix) belonging to an established artistic form; and (x) being the product of an intention to make a work of art.*<sup>5</sup>

The conceptions of art discussed earlier have each highlighted aspects of art's attributes, qualities and values but have done so at the expense of other of art's attributes, qualities and values. The breadth and flexibility of this present conception allow it to include objects and performances of all genres, styles, times and places while still, unlike the institutional conception, allowing for any and all of art's specialness and value as an aesthetically-oriented human activity. It also provides adequate means to identify works of art and it

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<sup>1</sup> Gaut (2000)

<sup>2</sup> Longworth and Scarantino (2010)

<sup>3</sup> Torres (2010)

<sup>4</sup> I. Barwell (2011) *pers. comm.*

<sup>5</sup> Davies (2004) p. 297

accommodates all paradigmatic works of art. Perhaps the end of art has been avoided, again.

## Gardens

Gardens fit comfortably into this concept and it is easy to think of paradigmatic art gardens that satisfy some, if not the majority of the criteria. Thus, Monet's garden at Giverny satisfies (i) – (ii), (iv), (vi) – (ix), and possibly (x), and Schwartz's Bagel Garden (see *Figure 5*, p. 58) satisfies all the criteria except, perhaps, (ii).

The problems that the conceptions examined earlier have posed for gardens are all resolved by Gaut's cluster concept. Hence: criteria (iii) and (v) allow for gardens to represent indirectly a range of complex ideas and meanings; criterion (ii) allows for gardens to be directly expressive of emotions by way of the expressive nature of their individual elements, and the manner in which they are combined; criterion (iv) allows for gardens to have unique, dynamic formal qualities; criterion (i) allows for gardens to be dynamic aesthetic objects; criteria (iii), (v) and (vi) allow for gardens to be challenging and innovative; and criteria (i) – (x) all allow for gardens to be works of art in spite of their perceived exclusion by the institutional theory's artworld. Therefore, there is no good reason to exclude gardens from the category of art.

Gardens share properties with paradigmatic art forms which are the reasons why we value them as art. However, in this discussion, I have only mentioned in passing an essential feature of gardens, namely dynamism. Gardens are dynamic arrangements of organic and inorganic elements. Their form and materials are dynamic and change over time, and this is a way in which gardens are distinctive.

In part two of my thesis I focus on the distinctiveness of gardens. In chapter five I describe the distinctive dynamic nature of gardens and discuss similarities and differences between gardens and other categories of art. In chapter six I

consider analogies between gardens and the performance arts of music and dance, and in chapter seven I compare gardens to the new paradigmatic arts of kinetic sculpture, installations and environmental art. Finally, in chapter eight, I provide a summary of the conclusions from both parts of my thesis.

## 5 Gardens

### *Poems, Paintings or Something Else?*

Philosopher John Ferrari<sup>1</sup> believes that gardens are meaningless when considered as whole artistic entities. He claims that gardeners organize plant lives in a way similar to which political systems organize human lives. For him, human societies carry no meaning when considered as a whole and therefore, by analogy, gardens do not do so either. Furthermore, this is a good thing. This controversial view is, I believe, unique to its writer. I have argued above that gardens can be meaningful artistic entities and I am supported in this belief by the writings of Ross and Miller. I now examine their writings with a view to clarifying what sort of artistic entities gardens might be and, therefore, how and what they may mean.

Ross devotes a significant part of *What Gardens Mean*<sup>2</sup> to a study of some well-known examples of 18th century landscape gardens. She states that they were regarded as works of art and that gardening was considered a sister art to poetry and painting. Her examination of them as works of art follows two lines, neither of which pursues what I believe is unique and distinctive about gardens. Her examination of Pope's garden at Twickenham, and the gardens at Stowe, Stourhead and West Wycombe, involves comparisons with the sister art of poetry. Consequently, they are discussed in terms of their direct and indirect representational and even their narrative capabilities. Individual built features, statuary, inscriptions, earth modeling and passages through the garden are analyzed but plants and plantings are almost completely ignored. Ross then examines the gardens of Painshill Park and Riveaulx Terrace in the light of *their* sister art of painting. Their picturesque qualities are described and their relationships to the paintings and theories of Claude, Poussin, Rosa, *et al.* are noted. In these picturesque gardens, plants are more important for Ross than

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<sup>1</sup> Ferrari (2010)

<sup>2</sup> Ross *op. cit.*

they are in the poetic gardens, but their value resides in their being static contributors to a picture rather than in their being living, changing objects. Viewing gardens as poetry or painting is interesting and from Ross we learn much about why 18th century gardens look the way they do.

I agree with Miller<sup>1</sup> that gardens *may* function in the manner of poems and paintings but that that ignores their temporal dimension. She describes the changes that may happen in gardens and groups them as seasonal, diurnal and geological. She claims that because these changes occur at different speeds they may cause us to experience different types of time, including what she terms cosmic, biological, geological and historical time, although she does not propose a mechanism by which this might happen. Miller also notes that another sort of change occurs in gardens which, unlike the changes mentioned above, is not part of an ongoing or cyclical process. For example, external agents like the wind can cause changes to the ways in which leaves and branches of trees move, and Miller say this this sort of change creates tempo and rhythm.

I do not disagree with the basic claims Miller makes with regard to what she terms 'temporality'. She is correct to claim that change is omnipresent in the garden and correct to claim that change is inevitably connected to the passing of time. However, I disagree with her in two important ways. Firstly, tempo and rhythm may be present in the limited way Miller understands those terms when leaves and branches of a tree are moving, but that is true of trees and the wind anywhere and not specific to gardens. In her example of the moving leaves and branches, any so-called tempo and rhythm created are accidental creations of nature and humans can have no input into creating them. Moreover, movements (changes) of this type are most likely to occur in plants rather than in other garden elements and this restricts the presence of an essential contributor to meaning in a garden, namely rhythm, to the aleatoric changes in

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<sup>1</sup> Miller *op. cit.*

one category only of gardens' elements. Secondly, the types of changes she classifies as geological, seasonal, and geological are, when joined with the biological patterns that plants obey, precisely the types of changes that *can* be organized to create rhythm and tempo, and therefore meaning, in a garden. I examine this second claim in detail in the sections that follow, and I propose a mechanism by which changes in gardens can be organized into, and perceived as, rhythmic units that function analogously to rhythm in music.

I have said that gardens' elements can be like poems to a limited degree and that gardens and their elements can function in a way analogous to paintings. However, neither analogy addresses their essential changeability and existence in time as well as space. Understanding gardens' temporal dimension is essential to an adequate appreciation of them. Their changeability means that an understanding of them as being analogous to performances is the best way to appreciate them as they deserve.

Plants are the most obvious and significant components of gardens. They change constantly and the fact, effects and significance of their changeability have been largely ignored by Kant and those who have followed him. I do not intend to challenge the claim that gardens can be understood and appreciated as things that are 'for the eye' and that aspire to be lovely to look at. Gardens can be understood as pictures and it is an acceptable way of understanding them, as far as it goes. However, appreciating gardens in this way affords only an incomplete experience of them and also ignores what is distinctive about them. Gardens have visual dimensions that the other visual arts, including painting, sculpture and architecture lack. The ways in which they use time and exhibit its passing make gardens unique among the visual arts. In particular, gardens present the passing of time visually in a way that is analogous to the way in which music presents the passing of time audibly, but with significant differences. Appreciating this aspect of gardens supplies a reason for conceptualizing them as a distinctive category of art that offers a unique kind of

experience. In the following sections of this chapter I present an argument for all these claims.

### ***Change and the Arts***

As I said in my introduction, Kant placed gardens in the same category as painting, sculpture and architecture. However, this was to ignore the way in which change is essential to gardens but not to these other arts, with the exception of kinetic sculpture, with which Kant, of course, was not familiar. I examine how the 'new' art of kinetic sculpture involves change in chapter five. Change is essential to gardens because their materials are natural objects, and in particular living organisms, and these materials are arranged to be objects of aesthetic experience. When gardeners place plants and other natural objects in a garden they expect those plants and objects to change and they expect the changes to be noticed and enjoyed. The sequence of changes that constitutes the life of a plant is singularly important in a garden. Important also are the relationships in and between the sequence of changes constituting the life of an individual plant, those taking place in the other plants and in the inorganic objects in the garden.

These changes supply reasons for the aesthetic pleasure taken in, and the aesthetic judgments made about gardens. Gardeners install and organize organic and inorganic objects in gardens in the knowledge that those objects will undergo characteristic changes and in the hope that people will pay attention to those changes and derive aesthetic pleasure from them. Not only flowers, but flowering, not only fruit, but fruiting, not only leaves, but furling and unfurling, swelling and dwindling, *and* the relations between these and other events, are arranged by the gardener for our interest and pleasure.

Painters, architects and sculptors expect their paintings, buildings and sculptures to change, but from an aesthetic point of view they do not generally expect viewers to pay attention to, or derive pleasure from, such changes. Examples of such changes are the peeling paint on a wooden building, the



darkening of varnish on a painting and the chipping or cracking of marble or stone in a sculpture. Objects such as these ideally should not change unless ageing has beneficial aesthetic effects, for example the patina on a bronze sculpture or the rose colour of old bricks. If age does not enhance their appearance these objects should ideally remain as they were when they were originally painted, built or sculpted and the point of any restoration, therefore, is to return the object to its original condition, or to a condition perceived to be most beautiful. In either case, it is desirable that the object remains in its restored state and does not undergo further change. So, although paintings, sculptures and architecture do change, our attention to them is to objects in a static configuration.

Gardens, however, are not ideally static. Although gardeners devote considerable time and energy to resisting change, by way of mowing lawns, cutting hedges, pruning roses and weeding beds, they also invariably expect, plan for and design with change(s) in mind. Unlike the arts discussed above, gardens need to change and develop and, with the exception of the Japanese sand and rock gardens already referred to, they are not expected to remain the same as when they were first created. Aesthetic appreciation of a garden as a static picture or series of unrelated static pictures is possible and in some cases may be reasonable. However, I believe that an appreciation that does not take account of the relations between what a garden is in one moment and what it has been in past and will be in the future misses out on the particular aesthetic experience which gardens can provide.

Changes are also essential to performances because performances are sequences of events. The events that combine to constitute a performance are carried out by agents we know as actors, dancers and musicians. These agents carry out actions in accordance with sets of instructions called scripts, choreographies and scores, and the actions and their products are the things to which we rightly pay attention and in which pleasure is taken. In the case of the dramatic arts these are the actions the actors carry out, the story they tell and

the way in which they tell it. In the case of dance these are the dancers' movements and the story they tell or the abstract patterns they create. In the case of music these are the sequences of sounds that the performers make by manipulating an instrument or using their own voice.

However, the changes that occur in performance are unlike the changes that occur in gardens because plants are not performers. This means that the changes plants exhibit are not intentional on the part of the plants, they cannot generally be stopped and started at will and nor can they be influenced to any significant degree by the gardener. For example, crocuses sprout in the winter or early spring, produce flowers and die down during the summer. These events are what crocuses do. However, crocuses are not performing and they are not carrying out instructions, even when in sprouting and flowering they realize a gardener's intentions.

The changes in gardens vary in significance and interest. For example, the ageing of a kauri tree over centuries is a very slow change and is usually of minimal interest to a garden visitor because it is imperceptible. However, the imperceptible change may be required as a background to perceptible changes or as a slow movement in the midst of faster movements. Moreover, the annual production of cones is a regular part of the life of a kauri and this is of interest because it is visible and aesthetically pleasing. The life of a petunia is of interest because during the space of a few months it will change sufficiently to exhibit growth, flowering, senescence and death. Not only the products of ageing, such as flowers and seeds, are of importance: the whole process occurs quickly enough to be of interest to an observer.

### ***Change and Time***

Events are changes in objects and changes involve time. An object changes when the properties it has or the relations in which it stands at one time differ from the properties it has or the relations in which it stands at another time. This means that changes cannot occur without time passing. Time and change

are, therefore, inextricably linked. Change and time are essential to gardens because they are essential to objects in them, and therefore Hunt is correct when he says that time makes a “fundamental contribution” to “the being of a garden” and that a garden “not only exists in but also takes its special character from four dimensions.”<sup>1</sup>

Time and its passage exist and can be experienced in different modes. The first of these modes is measurable, predictable time, the time of science and clocks. I will call this chronological time. The second mode is experiential time. This is time as individual humans experience its passing. It is not objectively measurable: it slows down and speeds up according to our individual experience of it in the context of some external or internal event or object. ‘Time flies when you’re having fun,’ is a cliché that succinctly expresses an opinion about the passage of experiential time. The third mode of time is musical time. This is the time created in a musical work. It is a product of the complex interplay between pulse, metre and the composed temporal units in a work. This time is different from the time taken for a musical performance, which can be declared accurately in terms of chronological time, and it is different from how long the musical composition seems to a listener.

### ***Time and the Arts***

It is possible to divide works of art into three groups depending on the way in which they involve time. The first group comprises paintings and non-kinetic sculpture and I have discussed above how changes in these objects are not properly the subject of aesthetic attention and appreciation. Our aesthetic attention to paintings and sculpture is not attention to their temporal aspects, events and processes, but to static configurations.

Some paintings and sculpture do, however, possess a temporal aspect because they are like novels inasmuch as they represent single events or narratives.

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<sup>1</sup> Hunt (2000) p. 15

Events and narratives take chronological time and so does looking at or reading them. However, the time it takes to look at or read the work is largely unrelated to the time taken by the events portrayed. Thus, a very long novel may represent events taking place during a half-hour long lunch. A slow reader with not much time for reading may take six months to read that very long account and a quick reader may take six hours. Similarly, in one painting several significant events in the life of a saint may be portrayed and these might take two minutes or two hours to look at.

In the cases of paintings and sculpture which represent events or narratives aesthetic attention cannot be directed to, nor aesthetic pleasure taken in, temporal aspects of those representations because they do not have any.

The second group includes opera, theatre, spoken poetry and dance that represents events or narratives. They have a temporal dimension because they are performances and performances are temporally ordered sequences of events. They take place in chronological time and so does the experience of them. The time taken to experience a performance is constrained by the time the performance takes. Watching a play or listening to an opera begins when the performance begins and ends when the performance ends.

Most works in this group represent sequences of events that take place in chronological time. They tell stories. Usually, the time taken by the performance differs from the time taken by the events it represents. A play that lasts two hours might represent events that occur over twenty years. A dance that lasts five minutes might represent the week long life of a butterfly. Because the passage of time is a constitutive component of these arts, aesthetic attention to them is attention to time's passage. Aesthetic pleasure can be taken in temporal aspects of the way in which they represent their stories.

The third group comprises performances of abstract music and abstract dance. Like the members of the second group, these arts have a temporal dimension

because they are performances and performances are temporally ordered sequences of events. They take place in chronological time and so does the experience of them. However, music and dance of this type do not represent events or narratives and, as a consequence, the time taken performing them is not to be contrasted with the time taken by the events they represent. In the case of music the essential artistic activity is the creation of temporal patterns that present the passing of time to the ear.

I argue firstly that music does this by creating patterns in sounds through rhythm. Aesthetic attention to musical performance includes attention not only to the pitch, timbre and amplitude of the sounds. It must also include attention to the temporal aspects of the performance's sounds. I argue secondly that, in the case of dance, changes in space as well as time are essential and an adequate appreciation of dance must include attention to changes of this kind.

When we experience gardens as paintings we experience them as we experience members of the first group that do not represent events or tell stories. We attend to them as static arrangements and ignore their temporal aspect altogether. However, when we experience them as presenting the passing of time we experience them as members of the third group, as objects whose temporal qualities are as important as their pictorial qualities. Our experience of them is, in this way, analogous to our experiences of musical performances and dance. I now argue that gardens present the passing of time to the eye by presenting visible patterns in changes occurring in, and to, organic and inorganic objects. The patterns are perceived to be rhythmic, just like patterns in sound. Like audible rhythms, they can be the objects of aesthetic pleasure and supply reasons for aesthetic judgments.

### ***Time and Change in Gardens***

Gardens cannot literally make time visible; even sundials and floral clocks can't do that. But noticing changes that take place in gardens makes awareness of time possible and noticing patterns in and between these changes makes

aesthetic appreciation of it possible. Gardens present visual evidence of the passage of time or evidence of a gardener's or garden designer's attempts to resist the changes brought about by it.

We are aware of change in gardens in two different ways. Firstly, we are aware, to a greater or lesser degree, of the changes that occur continuously in all natural objects and that are clearly exhibited in a garden since such objects are the material of which it is made. For instance, the individual plants in a traditional herbaceous border look completely different in midwinter from the way they look in midsummer. Secondly, insofar as gardens are designed, we may be aware of the designer's having composed, contrasted or otherwise articulated types of change in gardens in order to highlight the passage(s) of time(s) in ways that may be interesting and attractive.

The passage of chronological time is evident in gardens in three ways. There is, firstly, the time of geology and geomorphology, the time spans over which rocks, landforms and soils are made, changed and eroded. There is secondly, biological time, the time spans over which individual plants and parts of plants live, die, and reproduce. Thirdly, there are diurnal and seasonal cycles. The time the changes and the cycles take is the same as the time experiencing them takes, if we were to watch them for the whole time they take. This is a way in which changes in gardens are like performances. However, we don't usually sit and watch the grass grow or oak trees mature. This is because we would feel that the experience was taking even longer than the time it does take. We would experience it as intolerably long because it would be boring. This is an example of the difference between experiential and chronological time.

I have already claimed that it is in the nature of gardens that they change constantly, the most change occurring in the plants of the garden. Change is essential to all living organisms and the changes that constitute their lives are responsible for the richness and complexity of the experience of time that gardens offer. Moreover, it is the use of plants as materials that makes the art

of gardening distinctive and that makes the aesthetic experience of gardens different from the experience of paintings.

Plants are always either growing or dying, and sometimes different parts of the same plant can be growing and dying at the same time. Plants grow, set seed, senesce and die according to their internal biological clocks. You cannot usually see a mature kauri in a newly established garden and nor can you see camellia flowers in summer. You have to wait while the kauri takes its own time to grow and you have to wait for the appropriate season to see the camellia in flower.

The speed of change varies greatly between different plants. Petunias and radishes have brief life spans. The flowers of daylilies and moonflowers are particularly ephemeral although the plants are not. Some aloes mature over several years and then die as soon as they flower. Oaks endure for centuries but change quite markedly each year in tune with the seasons.

The fact that different plants, different parts of plants, and natural materials all have different rates of change presents aesthetic opportunities to the gardener in the way she chooses to combine plants and natural materials. For example, an oak tree grows slowly, its leaves grow and decay relatively quickly, a drift of crocuses underneath the oak appears and disappears at a different rate and a surrounding lawn is managed so that it looks the same all the time. Such a combination of plants affords visual interest but at the same time it creates a complex rhythm of lifecycles, growth and decay that may interest, excite, calm, disturb or reassure an attentive visitor. Similarly, rhythms of change and decay are also present to be noticed by the observant and informed where the passing of geological and geomorphological time is manifest in the shape of the ground itself, and in the shape, colour and composition of rocks, gravel, sand and soil.

All of this means that the passage of time is inescapable in gardens. There is always evidence of it: flowers opening, worms working the soil, leaves changing colour and falling from the trees, fern fronds unfurling, leaves and petals folding

for the night, water cascading, and even whole gardens maturing or senescing. Gardens do not merely happen to exhibit time's passing: they must do so. Any garden is living. It must change, and with that time must pass, no matter how subtly.

The patterns in these changes are there to be seen. They are visible and they are the fundamental artistic material of gardens as a distinctive art from paintings. I will now argue that they are like patterns in sound in that they are rhythms. They are visual rhythms produced in a way that is analogous to the way in which audible rhythms are produced.




## 6 Music, Gardens and Dance

### *Music makes the passage of time audible*


Susanne Langer developed a detailed philosophy of the arts in *Feeling and Form*<sup>1</sup> and *Philosophy in a New Key*.<sup>2</sup> She was comprehensive in her treatment of music but she did not discuss gardens. She described in detail how the individual arts function as symbolic forms. Each art involves an “illusory field” and music’s illusory field is time.<sup>3</sup> She claimed that music makes the passage of time audible. I agree with the spirit of this claim, but my account of how music does this, while it owes a debt to her, differs from hers.

Music cannot literally make time audible but, by organizing sounds rhythmically, it can draw listeners’ attention to its passing. Musical time, which rhythm articulates, is a complex product of the interactions between pulse, metre and what I call composed temporal units. (See *Figure 7*, below.)


**PULSE**  
allegro con brio



**METRE**  
allegro con brio



**COMPOSED TEMPORAL UNITS**  
allegro con brio



**Figure 7** Examples of pulse, metre and rhythm derived from the opening bars of Beethoven’s *Symphony No. 5*.

In a composition a composer divides objectively measurable chronological time into a regularly recurring pattern called pulse. A composer then organizes pulses into a metre, which is also usually regular and recurring. When we tap

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<sup>1</sup> Langer (1953)

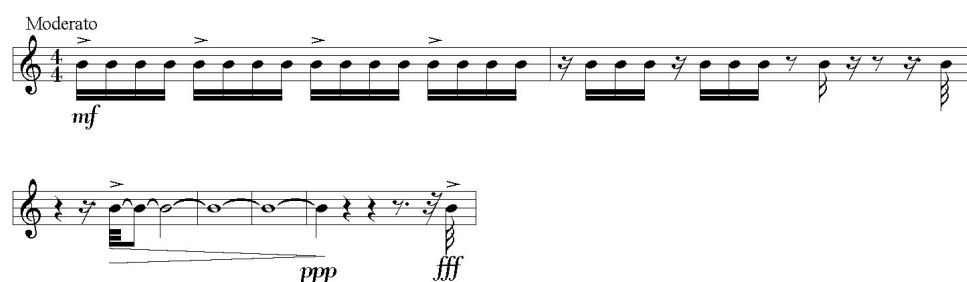
<sup>2</sup> Langer (1957)

<sup>3</sup> Langer (1953) pp. 104-132

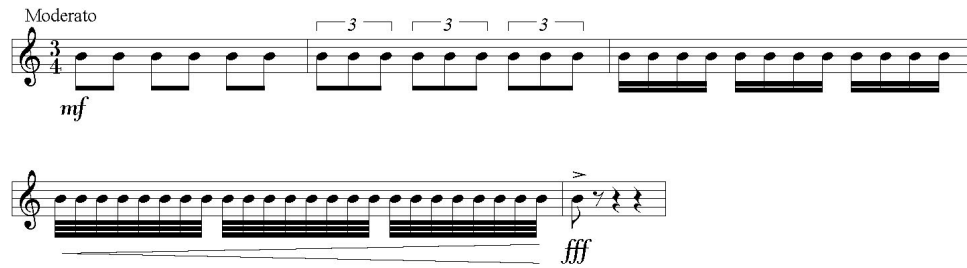
our feet or clap our hands in time to music it is often in accordance with elements of a composition's metre. Pulse and metre are indicated by a composition's tempo indication (e.g. *allegro* or *andante*) and its time signature (e.g. 2/4 or 3/4) respectively.

Rhythm is created in a composition when a composer invents composed temporal units, or rhythmic motifs, that are articulated and experienced in relation to the metre. The temporal events that constitute rhythms are usually linked to melodic units, but this is not always the case. Melody is not necessary. Music requires only rhythm to exist.

Musical time, which rhythm articulates, is not objectively measurable chronological time and nor is it experiential time, as defined in the previous chapter. It is, however, like experiential time in that it can appear to slow down, speed up, fragment or even stop. Just as excitement, boredom or shock can make human experiential time appear to pass quickly, drag or stop, so too can a composer manipulate her materials to create a range of temporal effects for our direct experience. (See *Figure 8* below and *Figure 9*, p. 83) Music uses the passage of this musical time as its fundamental artistic material. Music creates its own experiential, audible time world and offers us the opportunity to pay attention to it.



**Figure 8** Musical time starts regularly and predictably in this example but gradually it becomes fragmented, erratic and unpredictable.



**Figure 9** Although the pulse and metre remain constant musical time appears to speed up in this example.

Although we experience musical time as different from objectively measurable, chronological time we inevitably experience the former time in relation to the latter because that is the only way we can experience rhythm and thus experience sound as music at all. Perhaps just as a *cantus firmus* provides a melodic structural element around which a polyphonic musical composition is heard so too chronological time can be said to provide a temporal structural element, a '*rhythmus firmus*', against, or more accurately, parallel to which, a piece of music is heard.

### ***Gardens make the passage of time visible***

The relevant patterns in and between the changes that occur in gardens are visual. These visual patterns are rhythms produced in a way that is analogous to the way in which rhythms are produced in sound. They are patterns in the movements essential to gardens. All growth is movement. Sprouting, unfurling, flowing, fruiting are movements, and so are dwindling, drooping, falling and decaying.

In gardens, as in music, chronological time provides what I have called a '*rhythmus firmus*'. In a garden the continuum of chronological time divides itself into regular, recurring patterns experienced as diurnal and seasonal cycles. These cycles set up what we described in music as pulse and metre. It is important to note that in gardens this pulse and metre are not selected by the designer but are provided by nature itself.

Rhythm is created in a garden when a designer organizes natural objects into perceptual units. If they are plants then they bring with them the patterns of the events that constitute the lives of their kinds. For instance, oak trees grow from acorns, each year they lose all of their leaves, grow new leaves, flower and produce more acorns. Crocuses grow leaves and flowers in spring and then die down and hibernate until the next spring. The patterns in these events are given, not created, and there is a limit to the extent to which a gardener can alter or influence them. These patterns are experienced in relation to each other and to the background provided by the pulse and metre of diurnal and seasonal time, which are themselves stretches of chronological time. When we experience these patterns in this way we experience them as rhythm.

Just as in music, time in gardens is a complex product of the interactions between pulse, metre and selected perceptual units. But there is an important difference: all the elements of garden time are chronological time elements. Unlike musical time, chronological time cannot be slowed down or speeded up, reversed, fragmented or stopped. Gardens use the passage of chronological time as a fundamental artistic material but in so doing they create their own complex arrangement of temporal patterns and thereby offer us opportunities to think about the implications of time and its passage.

In music and gardens our experience of rhythms depends not only on our memory of what has preceded what we hear and see but also our expectation of what may follow what we hear and see. For instance, when deciduous trees are bare in gardens in winter we know that at a certain distance in time in the past the trees were covered in leaves and we know that at a certain distance in time in the future they will again have leaves. Similarly, in music our experience of the silence in bar 3 of the Beethoven example above is influenced by what we know we heard in bars one and two, and this knowledge in turn influences what we may expect to hear later in that bar and in the following bars. Thus, in both music and gardens these experiences are based on knowledge. But there is a difference. In music our sphere of knowledge is generally restricted to the

composition in progress and to the composer's compositional style. However, in gardens our knowledge may be of that particular garden, or one of its plants, a few minutes or a year ago, or it may be a much broader knowledge of living materials and natural processes in gardens or nature generally.

### ***Experiencing Time in Gardens***

Because people are living organisms, human responses to a garden's rhythms may be especially interesting, evocative and resonant. In gardens we are faced with patterns in real chronological time, rather than the 'play' time of music. These patterns may lead to reflections on time and its effects. By providing designed real-time worlds, gardens can offer us opportunities to observe painlessly, and to meditate on and experience time's passing. In gardens we see birth, senescence and death, we see slow and fast cyclical changes, and we see 'offspring' and 'parents'. These experiences enable reflections on the human condition, its permanence or transience, stability or instability, on mortality or regeneration, growth or decay, health or sickness. They allow us to reflect on the vagaries of human, as well as plant, life.

Our experiences of gardens may direct our attention to time itself, to its irreversibility, its unidirectionality, its cyclical nature, its inevitability and its inexorability. They may direct our attention to our comfort when we embrace time's passage or to our discomfort when we struggle against it. Some gardens, such as the so-called 'timeless' Zen-style raked sand gardens, and other gardens that highlight geological or very slow moving time, may invite us to reflect on eternity. They may offer us the opportunity to step out of our own time, to lose ourselves, to release ourselves from our human time and escape temporarily to a realm where time appears to stand still.

It could be said that in gardens we are both spectators and participants, that we both observe and dance in a garden of time.

## ***Gardens and Dance***

I have argued that, of all art forms, gardens are most like performances because they are essentially dynamic, and I have explored their temporal dimension through an analogy with music. However, in some ways, gardens are even more like dance, than music, because they involve changes in space as well as time. Moreover, dances are like gardens in that although rhythm is essential, audible sound is not.

It is also interesting to see how dance presents problems about its categorization as an art form that are similar to those presented by gardens. Dance is sometimes considered to be an expressive art in which the movements of the dancer give physical expression to the accompanying music and its emotions. Sometimes it is seen as a plastic art that represents objects by means of changing images or moving sculptural objects, or as a dramatic art that represents events in a narrative. Thus, it is sometimes thought of as partaking of the qualities of music, painting, sculpture and the dramatic arts.

For Langer, dance was different from all these other arts. She proposed that the art of dance had as its primary illusion the creation of a virtual realm of power. The power exhibited was, she wrote, "... not actual, physically exerted power, but appearances of influence and agency created by virtual gesture."<sup>1</sup> From this flowed her insights as to how and why dance arose and why it is of value and interest to us. While disagreeing with many of her conclusions, her claim that dance's primary illusory field is gesture is appealing. She was not a proponent of the aesthetic attitude: rather she believed a successful work of art expressed an aesthetic quality in the presence of which something akin to the aesthetic attitude was awakened in a viewer. In a successful dance then, ordinary physical movements need to be transformed into something else so that art can be made of it. This something else is gesture. A dancer's movement may itself be

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<sup>1</sup> Langer (1953) p. 175

appealing to the eye but Langer argues that the aesthetic quality of a dance allows that dancer's movement to be transmuted from an ordinary, actual movement into a virtual gesture. There is an analogy here with gardens because both gardens and dance use a preponderance of ordinary living objects as their raw material. So, in the same way that a growing plant is an ordinary, everyday object and needs to be considered differently as part of a work of art, so too, argues Langer, the dancer's ordinary movement of his ordinary body is experienced as something else, virtual gesture, when it is experienced within a dance. I suggest that changes in gardens should be seen in a similar way.

I have explained how dance and gardens are alike because they both involve changes in space and time. Changes in both dance and gardens may be big, small, fast or slow, or any combination of these qualities. Sometimes they are so slow or small that they are virtually imperceptible. However, the changes in dance are different from changes in gardens in three important ways. Firstly, in dance, the changes (movements) are *intentional*. They are executed by performers using parts of their bodies and other objects such as costumes or props. In dance, a dancer winks intentionally or performs a *jeté* intentionally or collapses intentionally. Involuntary movements on the part of the dancers, such as the aging of their bodies during a performance, are irrelevant to the dance.

In gardens all the relevant changes are involuntary. Plants grow. They sprout, flourish, wither and die. These changes in plants are the movements in gardens analogous to the intentional actions of dancers in dances, but the plants are not acting intentionally. These changes are initiated by the plants themselves but plants must change in these ways. They have no option in the matter. They are just doing what plants must do and therefore they are not performers.

Secondly, in dance, because the movements are performed intentionally by the dancers, usually in accordance with a pre-determined choreography, they can be varied intentionally and they can be started and stopped. A dance has a beginning and an ending. Plants cannot usually be made to stop and start

functioning as dancers do, although this happens to a degree in preparing gardens and plants for display and competition. Gardens can be installed or destroyed, but the changes in gardens continue indefinitely.

Thirdly, some of the changes in gardens can be directed and controlled by a garden designer in a way that is analogous to the direction of a choreographer. Such changes occur as a result of instructions. Lights can be programmed to perform according to a pre-determined plan. And, more importantly, water can be programmed to perform in a variety of ways, either by the provision of containers, jets or channels of particular shapes that influence its behaviour, or by more advanced mechanical (hydrological) means. Examples of this can be seen in the gardens at the Villa d'Este near Rome, in the 'joke' outdoor dining rooms of other Italian gardens of the Renaissance and in contemporary gardens such as Parc Andre Citroën in Paris. The changes in water, whether naturally occurring or mechanically induced, are important in gardens, and water's mutability has long been celebrated as a contributor to gardens in all four dimensions.

However, many of the changes in gardens that are produced by an external agency are not like the changes produced by a choreographer. Plants in gardens can be affected by wind and sun and this results in movements. For example, sunflowers turn to face the sun and leaves flutter in the breeze. Often these changes are easily observable and have aesthetic importance to the gardens as works of art. These movements have no equivalent in dance, where movements are determined by the performers or the choreographer. Any analogous changes that do occur in dance are irrelevant to it as a work of art.

In summary, gardens and dance are both visual arts in which our attention is properly directed to movements of objects in both time and space. Our understanding of gardens may be enriched to the degree that we can design, experience and evaluate them not only as a sub-category of painting but also as a category of art very similar to dance.



## 7 Gardens and Some Other arts

### ***Gardens and Kinetic Sculpture***

Kant's view of gardens as being like two-dimensional paintings has been discussed already, and it is reinforced by his separation of them from sculpture.<sup>1</sup> He linked sculpture with architecture and together they comprised the plastic division of the formative arts. He linked gardens with "painting proper" and they comprised the painting division of the formative arts. However, I believe that it will be useful to investigate potential analogies between gardens and sculpture, and in particular kinetic sculpture, to see if our understanding and appreciation of the latter may inform a clearer understanding of gardens' uniqueness.

Gardens are made up of three-dimensional objects in space. Like a sculpture, elements of a garden can be walked around, inspected from different viewpoints and touched. There are even small contained gardens, such as Schwartz's *Splice Garden*, (see *Figure 10*, p. 90) where the whole garden may be experienced as if it is a sculpture.

It has been noted already that sculptures are not expected to change and, if they do, our aesthetic attention is not properly directed either to the process of change nor to its results. However, in the genre of kinetic sculpture our attention is properly directed to objects and the ways in which they change in time and space. As a genre, kinetic sculpture shares this with dance and gardens.

Changes in objects in kinetic sculpture may be instrumentally achieved in accordance with a pre-determined 'score' or they may be random. Examples of instruments of change are natural processes, including tide, wind and sun,

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<sup>1</sup> Kant (2007) section 51: 151

actions on the part of viewers, and mechanical systems, a simple example of which is a cuckoo clock. When parts of a kinetic sculpture move or are moved in accordance with a predetermined 'score' they are functioning in a manner analogous to limbs and other moving parts of dancers, to the extent that those moving objects can be separated from the dancer moving them. An element in a kinetic sculpture can be moved in accordance with a choreography or other set of instructions just as a dancer's leg can be moved. There are differences in the source of the motion, the 'score' and the objects moving or being moved, but both sets of elements are objects undergoing change in time and space according to a pre-determined plan.



**Figure 10** Photograph of Martha Schwartz's *Splice Garden* for the Whitehead Institute, Cambridge MA., USA.<sup>1</sup>

Plants are objects that change in time and space in accordance with their own biological programmes and in this way they are unlike objects in kinetic sculpture and dance. However, plants in gardens may also change or be

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<sup>1</sup> [Online] Available from: <http://www.marthaschwartz.com/projects/bagelgarden.html> [Accessed 1 October 2011]

changed randomly by wind, rain and so on. When this occurs, garden plants are behaving like elements of randomly moving kinetic sculptures. A tree moving in response to wind is aesthetically interesting in the same way that a single element or all of a Calder mobile sculpture is and, in this way, gardens and kinetic sculpture are analogous.

### ***Gardens, Installations and Environmental Sculpture***

The objects and activities of art have often been characterized as different from objects and activities in the 'real' world. Not all philosophers and aestheticians agree on this and two exceptions will be discussed below. However, for those who do agree, terms such as disinterest, aesthetic attitude and aesthetic experience are frequently used. These terms name ways in which art and our experiences of it are, or in some instances should be, in a separate compartment from the rest of our everyday objects and ways of behaving. This separation occurs more easily in some genres than others.

Music and dance are performance arts. They occur in and create timeframes and, in the case of dance, places separate from the 'real' world. Kinetic sculpture comprises objects specifically designed or designated to be art objects and they are perceived differently from 'real' world objects by the initiated. It is comparatively straightforward to see that the products of music, dance and kinetic sculpture are different from the 'real' world, especially when they appear in concert halls, theatres and galleries, and to regard them in a special way, as works of art. By contrast, gardens and architecture are three-dimensional objects that are to varying degrees inhabitable and useful, and they *are* our real world. We are able to move in and through them and, at least theoretically, are able to sit, eat, sleep and so on in them. This can be problematic when we invoke concepts like disinterest and aesthetic experience. Considering gardens and buildings as art objects, when they are so patently of the 'real' world, is clearly more complicated than considering say poetry and music as art. Gardens and architecture have commonly been considered

borderline arts<sup>1</sup> and apart, from their utility, their realness has been a significant reason for this status

Since about 1970, the avant-garde art world has deliberately sought out this quality of three-dimensional, inhabitable realness and exhibited it through the new genre of installation art. However, this genre has never been considered borderline art: it has in fact been in the vanguard of contemporary art ever since it first appeared. Unlike gardens and buildings, installations have never been expected to be useful, and this may have partially informed their status as bona-fide art objects. However, they do share with gardens many features and qualities which have been raised as difficulties for gardens' being considered art, and an examination of those qualities and features may teach us more about the uniqueness of gardens as bona-fide examples of art.

Installations are typically three-dimensional works that surround and engage the viewer in ways similar to gardens. It may be said that they separate off a part of reality, modify it in some way and offer it back to us as an art object. Installations may be inside a building or outdoors. If outdoors they are in effect, as a genre, synonymous with land and environmental art. For the time that a viewer is in the installation it is, particularly if it is outdoors, her real world and not just some abstraction from it. She is in its three-dimensional space, is surrounded by it. She is able to move through it. She may visit all or part of it and usually do so in whatever order and for as long as she likes. In all of these ways installations are analogous with gardens.

Installations often appeal to two or more of the senses. For example, Parekowhai's *On Looking Into Chapman's Homer* (see *Figure 11*, p. 93) appeals equally to the senses of sight, touch and hearing because it involves sculptures and musical performances in distinctive indoor and outdoor settings. Gardens appeal to all five senses and the vestibular sense, although all senses are not

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<sup>1</sup> Davies (1994) pp. 31-47

usually equally involved, or involved at all, at any given moment. Gardens have therefore sometimes been labeled, by Chatterjee<sup>1</sup> and others, as the ideal *Gesamtkunstwerk* but this description, to the extent that it is true, could apply equally to complex installations.



**Figure 11** Photograph of part of Michael Parekowhai's  
*On Looking Into Chapman's Homer* at the 2011 Venice Biennale.  
(Photo: Michael Hall)<sup>2</sup>

The multi-sensory nature of gardens and installations means that they are difficult to notate, record, reproduce and conserve and this, in turn, makes them difficult to discuss, analyze, study or exhibit adequately away from the site. The way their boundaries are perceived also contributes to the difficulties. Both gardens and installations may have blurred boundaries. "Where does the garden end and the rest of the landscape begin?" is a common question. A

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<sup>1</sup> Chatterjee (1986)

<sup>2</sup> [Online] Available from: <http://www.nzatvenice.com/michael-parekowhai> [Accessed 9 November 2011]

similar question can be asked of installations: “Is the rest of the gallery part of this work?”, or, outdoors, “Is the sky part of this installation?”

Installations are usually designed for and installed in a particular setting. This is particularly true of installations designed for outdoor spaces or indoor-outdoor spaces. Such installations are often site specific just as gardens are and they therefore share gardens’ difficulty in being reproduced at other locations. It is suggested that *On Looking into Chapman’s Homer* cannot be reproduced away from its Venetian settings because those particular environs are an essential part of the work. Similarly the *allées* of Versailles cannot be reproduced in Dubai, at least not without more than a touch of Disneyland.

The aspects of installations discussed above have highlighted similarities between gardens and installations. There remains to be addressed an important difference between them. The resources which gardens supply for pictorial representation and narrative are slender. The principal materials of gardens are natural and they may be beautiful. For these reasons garden have tended to be associated with the experiences of beauty, pleasure and pleasantness, none of which have typified installations, at least when they first appeared. Because installations can exhibit qualities and emotions such as irony, discomfort and ugliness and because they can be densely intellectual, they have been much favoured by philosophers of contemporary art, who have chosen by and large to ignore gardens, perhaps because gardens cannot be and do these things.

Reference has already been made to Langer’s understanding of ‘aesthetic quality’ and it is now time to investigate it further because it provides a step towards the theories of Arnold Berleant, which are particularly pertinent to the experience of gardens and outdoor installations.

Langer believed that art was a fundamentally important and valuable human and personal activity. But that did not imply for her that it was special and beyond the realm of ordinary experience or that its objects were necessarily

different from ordinary objects. What designated something an art object was that it possessed what she termed 'aesthetic quality', by virtue of which it was able to function as a non-discursive symbol of our inner lives, and this function could theoretically be performed equally well by an artwork or some other object like a piece of craft. She wrote that art is the "creation of forms symbolic of human feeling,"<sup>1</sup> and these symbols exist to articulate the world of feeling that is otherwise ineffable. But they are incomplete symbols of that world and require the conscious participation of each individual for their completion.

Langer knew from personal experience that art was not about aesthetic distance and disinterest and her theories supported her in that. She took us a step further towards understanding that something like a garden can be real, even useful, and at the same time be art. It was art because it was a special sort of symbol and because we consciously interacted with it to a particular end. Berleant took conscious interaction a step further and argued for what he called active engagement. Berleant too knew from personal experience that art is not about aesthetic distance and disinterest and he continues to be active equally as a philosopher and a musician. In *Art and Engagement*<sup>2</sup> he outlines a framework for appreciating the arts based on active engagement with them. This approach has much in common with contemporary aesthetic theories of nature, in which field Berleant is also active. In fact he writes: "A single aesthetic applies to nature and art because, in the final analysis, they are both cultural constructs, and so we are not talking about two things but about one."<sup>3</sup> What he terms the "aesthetics of engagement"<sup>4</sup> allows that we experience art, and nature, perceptually and appreciate it aesthetically while at the same time enjoying a reciprocal relationship with it.

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<sup>1</sup> Langer (1953) p 40

<sup>2</sup> Berleant (1991)

<sup>3</sup> Berleant (2004) p. 86

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p. 85

Berleant's views provide a starting point for a review of the way gardens have traditionally been experienced and discussed. They take us in the direction of environmental aesthetics wherein gardens' realness, changeability, multi-sensory nature, lack of authorial control, indistinct boundaries, and so on, are no longer problematic but are in fact taken for granted.



## 8 Conclusion

I have shown that gardens are like paradigmatic types of art in many ways: gardens can represent, express emotion, exhibit meaningful form, be novel and original, be aesthetic objects, and be of interest to The Artworld. However, no historical conception of art is adequate because they all fail to accommodate some undoubted works of art. Except in the case of the institutional theory, each conception has highlighted a feature of paradigmatic art forms that is also to be found in gardens. I have shown that the cluster concept is the only one that can accommodate all art forms. It also accommodates gardens.

In addition, I have shown that some gardens possess qualities that are our reasons for treating objects as works of art and for valuing them as such. However, they offer a unique combination of those qualities. Gardens are distinctive because the combination of artistic and aesthetically relevant features to be found in them is distinctive. The distinctiveness of gardens is a result of the ways in which their principal materials, living organisms, change over time and the ways in which those changes are experienced.

I have emphasized similarities between gardens and the performance arts of music and dance. I have explained how gardens function rhythmically in a manner analogous to the way in which music functions rhythmically and how movement of objects in time and space is an important artistic and aesthetic feature of gardens and dance. Both music and dance are paradigmatic art forms. They have been included in the list of paradigmatic arts since the time of Plato and Aristotle. However, there are ways in which gardens are not like music and dance and I have identified some significant dissimilarities.

I have shown that gardens are also importantly similar to the new art forms of kinetic sculpture, installations and environmental sculpture. When we look at a

piece of kinetic sculpture we direct our attention to objects and how they change in time and space in the same way that we do in gardens and dance. When we experience an installation or environmental sculpture we experience it as 'real', three-dimensional and inhabitable in the same way that gardens are.

For all these reasons it seems clear that gardens deserve to be seen as a unique art form and should regain the status they enjoyed in the 18th century.

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