MODERNISM RECONSIDERED:

JAMES ROSE AND THE RIDGEWOOD RESIDENCE

by

SAADIA RAIS

(Under the Direction of Dan Nadenicek)

ABSTRACT

James Rose was an iconic Modernist landscape architect. His writings are considered primary texts within the canon of landscape architecture theory. Rose argued for integration of indoor and outdoor spaces, as well as adaptation of a design over time. During the 1960s, Rose was invited to Japan, fell in love with traditional Japanese design, converted to Zen Buddhism, and continued to visit Japan frequently until his death. Rose's interest in Japan informed his designs thereafter, especially the design of his iconic Modernist residence in Ridgewood, New Jersey. However, his residence also changed due to the death of his mother, a leaking roof, and more. **So, can the residence still be considered a Modernist design, despite these changes?** Rose's Ridgewood residence continues to be a Modernist design because his Modernist philosophies of integration and adaptation continued to shape his evolving design forms, enriched by his Zen spiritual beliefs.

INDEX WORDS: James Rose, Modernism, modernity, landscape architecture theory, design theory, Zen Buddhism, integration, adaptation, adaptive design

MODERNISM RECONSIDERED:

JAMES ROSE AND THE RIDGEWOOD RESIDENCE

by

SAADIA RAIS

B.A., Virginia Tech, 2013

M.S., Virginia Tech, 2016

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2020

© 2020

Saadia Rais

All Rights Reserved

MODERNISM RECONSIDERED:

JAMES ROSE AND THE RIDGEWOOD RESIDENCE

by

SAADIA RAIS

Major Professor:	Dan Nadenicek
Committee:	Eric MacDonald
	Nell Andrew
	Dean Cardasis

Electronic Version Approved:

Ron Walcott
Interim Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
August 2020

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many people were instrumental in the process of writing this thesis. Thank you to my thesis advisor Professor Dan Nadenicek for his continued encouragement despite the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, to Dean Cardasis for his conscientious mentorship during my time residing in and working at the James Rose Center for Landscape Architectural Research and Design, to Dr. Nell Andrew for inspiring me with her scholarship and reinvigorating my love for continental philosophy, to Dr. Eric MacDonald for demonstrating the importance of cosmological and individual perspectives when considering the built environment, to my family (especially my parents) for their endless support and reassurance, to Dr. Bob Siegle at Virginia Tech for teaching me the synergies between critical theory and Zen Buddhism and for his faith in me as a scholar, to Sarah Hutichinson and Jesse Lafian for their camaraderie, and to my colleagues and mentors at the College of Environment + Design at UGA for their guidance and optimism.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

INTRODUCTION

James Rose was an iconic Modernist landscape architect. His writings are considered primary texts within the canon of landscape architecture theory. Rose argued for integration of indoor and outdoor spaces, as well as adaptation of a design over time. During the 1960s, Rose was invited to Japan, fell in love with traditional Japanese design, converted to Zen Buddhism, and continued to visit Japan frequently until his death. Rose's interest in Japan informed his designs thereafter, especially the design of his iconic Modernist residence in Ridgewood, New Jersey. However, his residence also changed due to the death of his mother, a leaking roof, and more. **So, can the residence still be considered a Modernist design, despite these changes?**

"Modern" can mean different things in different contexts. It can refer to the Modern Project, which dates back as early as the Renaissance and the Enlightenment. It can refer to Modernity, shaped by rapid industrialization and urbanization. It can refer to Modernism, which largely deals with art and philosophy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Furthermore, various styles of art are considered Modernist. What is considered Modernist within landscape architecture is ill-defined. Landscape historian Marc Treib posits that "instead of a coherent doctrine, one finds rambling and imprecise printed discourse, a motley group of individuals, many of whom were not landscape architects by training, and a trail of projects that could be classified as

modern only to varying degrees."[1] However, there is no singular definition of Modernism in any discipline. When describing Modernism, landscape theorist Catherine Howett argues that "the critical questions for architecture and landscape architecture in the twentieth century should have little to do with matters of 'style'."[2] Definitions of Modernism in landscape architecture should look beyond one specific form vocabulary or style, and instead examine *why* Modernist landscape practitioners applied certain design decisions. Rose's Ridgewood residence continues to be a Modernist design because his Modernist philosophies of integration and adaptation continued to shape his evolving design forms, enriched by his Zen Buddhist spiritual beliefs.

The Legacy of James Rose in Landscape Architecture

James Rose, Dan Kiley, and Garrett Eckbo were enrolled in the landscape architecture program at the new Harvard Graduate School for Design in the 1930s. The school also included programs in architecture and urban planning. Walter Gropius, founder of the famous Bauhaus school, had fled Nazi Germany and landed as chair of the Department of Architecture at Harvard. Other Modern designers joined him there as faculty members with the intention of creating a Modern curriculum. However, landscape architecture had not been taught at the Bauhaus, and the landscape architecture program at Harvard continued to teach within the Beaux Arts style. This did not satisfy Rose, Kiley, and Eckbo. They were inspired by the modern momentum within

[1] Marc Treib, "Axioms for a Modern Landscape Architecture" in *Modern Landscape Architecture: A Critical Review*, ed. Marc Treib (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993), 37.
[2] Catherine Howett, "Modernism and American Landscape Architecture," in *Modern Landscape Architecture: A Critical Review*, ed. Marc Treib (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993), 34.

the other programs as well as in contemporary art and culture, and demanded that the landscape architecture curriculum follow suit, ridding itself of Beaux Arts traditions.

These demands led to rebellion, and Rose was ultimately expelled. Shortly afterwards, he began to write for *Pencil Points* magazine (later *Progressive Architecture*.) As described by Dean Cardasis, director of the James Rose Center for Landscape Architectural Research and Design and author of Rose's biography, Rose's *Pencil Points* articles "were significant, even seminal, in establishing the history and theory of the art of modern landscape design."[3] In Marc Treib's *Modern Landscape Architecture: A Critical Review* (considered the canon of modern landscape architectural theory,) seven of the twenty-three articles were authored by Rose, three of which were written in collaboration with Eckbo and Kiley. Despite his expulsion from Harvard's Graduate School of Design, Rose became a successful landscape architecture theorist.

Rose's attack on Beaux Arts design traditions drew from emerging principles in architecture, the arts, and science. However, it was also inspired by cultural changes beyond these disciplines. In his best-known article, "Freedom in the Garden," Rose asserted:

> Contemporary design represents a change in kind, a change in conception, the expression of a new mentality we have derived from the effects of the industrial and economic revolutions. These revolutions have the significance for our civilization that the discoveries of Galileo, Copernicus, and Magellan had for the Renaissance. They have put a

[3] Dean Cardasis, *James Rose: A Voice Offstage* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2017), 32.

> transparent but impenetrable screen between us and the past, and we find ourselves in a new mental atmosphere.… The only direct stimulus we can get from the past is an understanding of how the social and psychological influences led a particular civilization to arrive at its peculiar expressions. We should do the same for our own civilization and seek to express it.[4]

It was this "new mental atmosphere" created by the industrial and economic revolutions that invigorated the charge behind Rose's philosophies. He stated that "no absolute exists in design any more than it does in nature,"[5] and developed improvisational design techniques that unfolded in ways that were specific to each site. He also integrated indoor and outdoor spaces, blurring the lines between "landscape" and "architecture." It is essential to remember that Rose's legacy as a designer is rooted in his Modernist philosophies and theories rather than in a prescriptive design vocabulary.

RIDGEWOOD, NJ : The Residence of James Rose

Rose enlisted in the Navy during World War II, and was stationed in the Mariana Islands as well as Okinawa. The war had a major impact on Rose. As described in his biography:

> During his time in the service, with its red-tape inefficiencies and injustices and its intimate exposure of human greed and jealousy under stress, Rose became increasingly disillusioned, alienated, and embittered. As he moved from basic training to the Pacific front, his efforts to express his

[4] James C. Rose, "Freedom in the Garden," *Pencil Points*, October 1938,: 641-642.
[5] Rose, "Freedom in the Garden," 643.

> creativity became bogged down in the military's demand for conformity. He lost his privacy, and he daily confronted what he saw as the mounting hypocrisies of the war. In his letters home he refers to himself and his fellow sailors as "inmates," but he explains that he has found escape through his imagination, withdrawing to what he calls a "little island in the mind."[6]

For Rose, this "little island in the mind" became a place of refuge from war's injustice, as well as authority's hypocrisy and demand for conformity. But injustice, hypocrisy, and conformity can exist beyond wartime. In Rose's case, he saw it clearly within the context of suburban life. During his enlistment, he had created a model for his future residence by scavenging materials: a stolen piece of plywood, galley flour from the mess halls, brown paper wrapping from a package his mother had sent, and more.[7] After the war, Rose bought a plot of land in Ridgewood, New Jersey (a suburb of New York City) and constructed the residential design.

This home did not resemble a conventional Suburban house. He built three separate apartments for himself, his mother, and his sister around the existing trees on the site. These apartments were arranged to include interstitial courtyards, creating an integrated system of "landscape" and "architecture." There was no clear entrance, front door, lawn, or other recognizable elements of a suburban home. But through this lack of convention, he created many private flexible spaces indoors and outdoors for himself

[6] Cardasis, *James Rose: A Voice Offstage*, 45.
[7] James Rose, Letter to his mother Minnie Rose, December 9, 1944, JRCA.

and his family on a small plot of land. Instead of a little island in the mind, this residence was a little island in the suburbs.

The Ridgewood residence exemplifies **three key design motifs** that Rose used throughout his lifetime: fusion of shelter and landscape, private outdoor spaces, and creative use of everyday materials. The fusion of shelter and landscape required that architectural elements and landscape elements be arranged in an integrative way. According to Rose, this had both experiential value as well as economic value. This was imperative within the changing world of the twentieth century. In 1938, fifteen years before the residence was completed, he wrote:

> The truly modern mind accepts the human equation in design and the need of individual integration with a larger spatial and social conception… Cost is the best argument for more expansive integration. The old-time house with a garden tacked on has passed from contemporary thought in design not only because it was cumbersome and tedious, but also because to build in segregated compartments requires more space and maintenance for the same amount of living.[8]

Many Modern architects used grids to create open floor plans (echoing Piet Mondrian's geometric forms), favoring an integration of each room through volumetric arrangement rather than a separation of each room with walls. Rose continued this gridded open plan throughout whole sites, arranging shelter and landscape elements, such as driveways and gardens, in an integrated way to make the most use of a site as well as to increase

[8] James C. Rose, "Integration" *Pencil Points*, December 1938, 760.

the perceived volume of individual spaces. Use of floor-to-ceiling glass walls further increased the line of sight between sheltered and outdoor spaces, allowing occupants to be both *inside the built space* as well as *inside the adjacent garden*. Also, Rose created more private outdoor areas through his careful spatial arrangements. Rather than dropping a house at the center of a lot and putting foundation plantings and an exposed lawn around it, as was the norm in post-WWII suburbia, Rose created outdoor "rooms" to be used for private enjoyment. This was a way to make the most use of a site.

Rose loved finding railroad ties and using them in his landscape designs. His first use of railroad ties in a garden was for a design he did with architect Antonin Raymond in 1946. Like his fusion of shelter and landscape, the railroad ties provided both experiential and economic value, creatively utilizing materials at hand to create form and function. As described in his biography:

> They supported his development of a distinctive geometry that was inherent in ties as a building material and that was reminiscent of a modern spatial sensibility, as expressed in the abstract cubist paintings he had both cited (and created) before and during World War II. Modular, segmented, and lineal, but not necessarily orthogonal, when assembled into steps and retaining walls railroad ties enabled development of a dynamic, flexible, obtuse-angled, three-dimensional spatial experience that, in combination with the use of existing site features, would become characteristic of Rose's work throughout his career.[9]

[9] Cardasis, *James Rose: A Voice Offstage*, 60.

Other materials that Rose used in modular ways were concrete blocks and pavers. Rose used concrete blocks to create exterior walls in sheltered spaces, and then extended those walls into landscape areas to enclose the space. He also created tables out of concrete pavers he had used on the ground plane, set inside a steel frame. Rose would continue to creatively use materials in his residence and other designs, much as he did with the model he created during his enlistment on the Pacific front. This practice allowed him to use readily available Modern materials, improvising the design of a site.

JAPAN : Spirituality and Mindfulness

In 1960, James Rose was one of eighty-four foreign designers who participated in the World Design Conference in Japan. While the conference dealt mainly with Modern urban design, Rose fell in love with Japanese tradition during his visit. This impacted him for the rest of his life. Afterwards, he visited Japan almost annually until his death. He converted to Zen Buddhism, which is not surprising. His attachment to his "little island in the mind" during wartime was a meditative refuge within the suffering of life.

Rose had a great admiration for how the Japanese regarded the landscape, especially in comparison to Western attitudes. He once wrote "their first language is NATURE, and yours is logic and words."[10] This was quite a statement coming from a man who was so regarded for his words, particularly his words about the landscape. However, despite his admiration for Japanese traditions, Rose hated being asked to

[10] James C. Rose, *Gardens Make Me Laugh* (Norwalk: Silvermine Publishers, 1965), 76.

design Japanese gardens. He had stated that “a Japanese garden is a garden made in Japan.”[11] In fact, he criticized the representational and pictorial nature of traditional Japanese gardens. In contrast, his landscape designs had emphasis on spatial experience and utility. Dean Cardasis claims that Rose’s gardens did not imitate Japanese garden forms, but rather they did “provide Rose’s clients in America with an opportunity to perceive their integrations with nature.”[12] Integration had been Rose’s aspiration long before his Japan visits.

Zen Buddhist beliefs were compatible with Rose’s improvisational design style, in which a design unfolded over time based on the existing site and its features — a type of mindfulness that was uncommon in an industrialized, mass-produced world. However, improvisation was also a practice he had developed before his visits to Japan. The railroad tie, an item he often improvised with, served as an example of something that was both *modern* (in its modularity, geometry, and context of existence) and *mindful* (in its ability to be utilized in ways that responded to each individual site’s needs and opportunities through a variety of specific uses.) His design process was not only improvisational in the short-term, but sometimes in the long-term.

Throughout his life, the design of Rose’s Ridgewood residence adapted and changed. Some of these changes were influenced by his visits to Japan, such as his use of rice-paper Shoji screens as doors within the house as well as to cover glass walls for privacy. The Shoji screens also become backdrops for foliage shadows when drawn over exterior glass walls in the mornings and afternoons. Illuminated by the

[11] Rose, *Gardens Make Me Laugh*, 66.
[12] Cardasis, *James Rose: A Voice Offstage*, 64.

sunlight, shadows from the rhododendrons and tree branches dance on the surface, changing position as the sun rises and sets. While watching this display, one can hear the sound of the garden fountains outside, which are integrated with sculptures that Rose created out of scrap copper flashing left over from construction. Because most exterior doors also have an additional wire screen, one can hear the sound of bubbling water throughout the warm season, leaving the doors open. The garden is a part of the indoor space even when covered, and can be celebrated in a separate and unique way during specific times of day and year. These experiences can be described by the Japanese term *yūgen*, which entails the mystery of the universe through suggestions and allusions of what exists beyond what we can directly see in front of us. When in the residence, visitors can feel connected not just to the landscape, but also to the present, and the rhythm of the sun and earth and water — to the infinite, and their role in it. Cardasis describes Rose's design objectives after visiting Japan as such:

> ... Rose became even more focused on his objective of creating the opportunity for an acute perception of nature through designed spatial experiences. Gardens might still provide for the social life of the suburban family, but they *had* to provide for the spiritual reunion of each suburbanite with nature. A typical garden's program might include tennis, swimming, and outdoor dining, but the garden's real purpose was simply to be there when one entered it, so that a fusion of the individual with the infinite might occur. More important for Rose, each garden provided him with the opportunity to ignore or outfox the limitations imposed by authority — to

> dwell in a creative world where he could engage the physical qualities of a site with minimal interference.[13]

Rose's modern design motifs still existed in the evolving design of his Ridgewood residence: fusion of shelter and landscape, private outdoor spaces, and use of found materials. However, these motifs were enriched by the spiritual journey that Rose undertook after visiting Japan. Rose was responding to the Modern condition of suburbia not just with frugality and utility, but eventually with mindfulness.

The design of Rose's Ridgewood residence continued to change, but not only due to his visits to Japan. After his mother's death in the 1970s, Rose saw no reason to have three separate apartments on the site, and instead integrated two of the apartments into a larger house-like structure, leaving his apartment separate. The connection of the two apartments created an interior courtyard that was only accessible from indoors. A leak in the flat roof needed repair, and rather than covering the leak directly, Rose created a partial pitched roof structure that was ten to fifteen feet above the existing roof. He also created walking access to the old roof with a staircase in the new interior courtyard, leading to what became a roof garden. A bridge led from the roof of the joined apartments to the roof of the other apartment, also a roof garden, thereby doubling the usable footprint of the built structures. A Zendo, or meditation hall, was created in the roof garden space. Rose's improvisational and adaptive design techniques, as well as his fusion of shelter and landscape, carried over in his evolving Ridgewood residence design, which now included private rooftop outdoor spaces.

---

[13] Cardasis, *James Rose: A Voice Offstage*, 66.

Some additional changes include the use of flagstone paving materials, the positioning of certain rocks, additional pools formed by obtuse angles, and changes in plant material (favoring the native broadleaf evergreen shrub *Rhododendron maximum*.) These changes were accomplished in a way that still echoed Rose's original design sentiments — sentiments that are considered canonical in Modern landscape design. If we consider Catherine Howett's assertion that "landscape architecture in the twentieth century should have little to do with matters of 'style'"[14], we can affirm that though Rose's designs may have changed in style in some ways after his Japan visits, he still drew from his primary Modern philosophies, enriching them with spiritual lessons he learned afterward. In his writings and throughout his design career, he clearly responds to a new mental atmosphere created by the industrial and economic revolutions. While his Ridgewood residence changed from its original orthogonal Mondrian-like grid layout to incorporate more obtuse angles, it still exhibited abstract geometries inspired by Cubist painters. Furthermore, he continued to create an economy of space using spatial arrangements that integrated indoor and outdoor spaces, regardless of his specific design materials and forms. This was a response to the modern condition, rather than a conformity to a specific defined formal *style*. Finally, it is expected that a design of a residence changes as the residents' lives change. Any building is expected to require maintenance, and Rose's maintenance included design changes to his residence that further relayed his Modern design philosophies. This is especially evident through his spatial arrangements, increase of usable private space, and improvisation. Rose's

[14] Howett, "Modernism and American Landscape Architecture," 34.

Modern design practices were bolstered by his spiritual journey in Zen Buddhism, rather than detracted by it.

The next several chapters contain discussions involving the term “modern” and Modernism in landscape architecture, the works and ideas of James Rose prior to his visits to Japan, and an examination of the Ridgewood residence alongside Rose’s later writings. To understand how Rose is a Modernist, we must consider what “Modern” means, both in a broad sense and also within the discipline of landscape architecture. Because Modernism does not denote one specific style, we will explore how Rose specifically addressed Modernism in his writings and in his built works. Finally, we will use the Ridgewood residence as a case study to consider how adaptation fits into expressions of Modernism.

CHAPTER 1: Modernism in Art and Design

The term “Modern” has various definitions. The **Modern Project** (the philosophical and political movement) dates back to the Renaissance and continued through the Enlightenment. This laid the foreground for a broad acceptance of science, reason, secular concepts, and individuality as major driving factors within society. **Modernity**, chronologically following the Modern Project, is characterized by rapid industrialization, urbanization, and capitalism. Technological and political *progress* became points of focus. Finally, **Modernism** denotes art and philosophical movements in the late nineteenth century into the twentieth century. Modernism in landscape architecture was influenced by Modern architecture, Modern art, urban planning, new scientific and mathematical discoveries, and more. I primarily explore the Modern Project, modernity, and Modernism throughout this chapter to discuss Modern design, leading to the conception of Modernist landscape architecture.

The Modern Project

The Renaissance was a time period noted for its great intellectual and artistic development, shifting away from the piety of the Middle Ages and instead glorifying the power of mankind. The “Renaissance man” had many talents and could weave the beauty of reason through aesthetic works, mathematical deduction, language, and

moral philosophy. Political philosophers like Machiavelli turned to Greek and Roman theorists to build new conceptions of civic life. The advent of public libraries and the printing press brought scholarship out of the church and into the hands of anyone who had access. A celebration of intellectual exploration was more possible than ever before, emphasizing the importance of the individual conscience. The spirit of the time period can be summarized by Descartes' infamous Rationalist statement, "I think, therefore I am."[15]

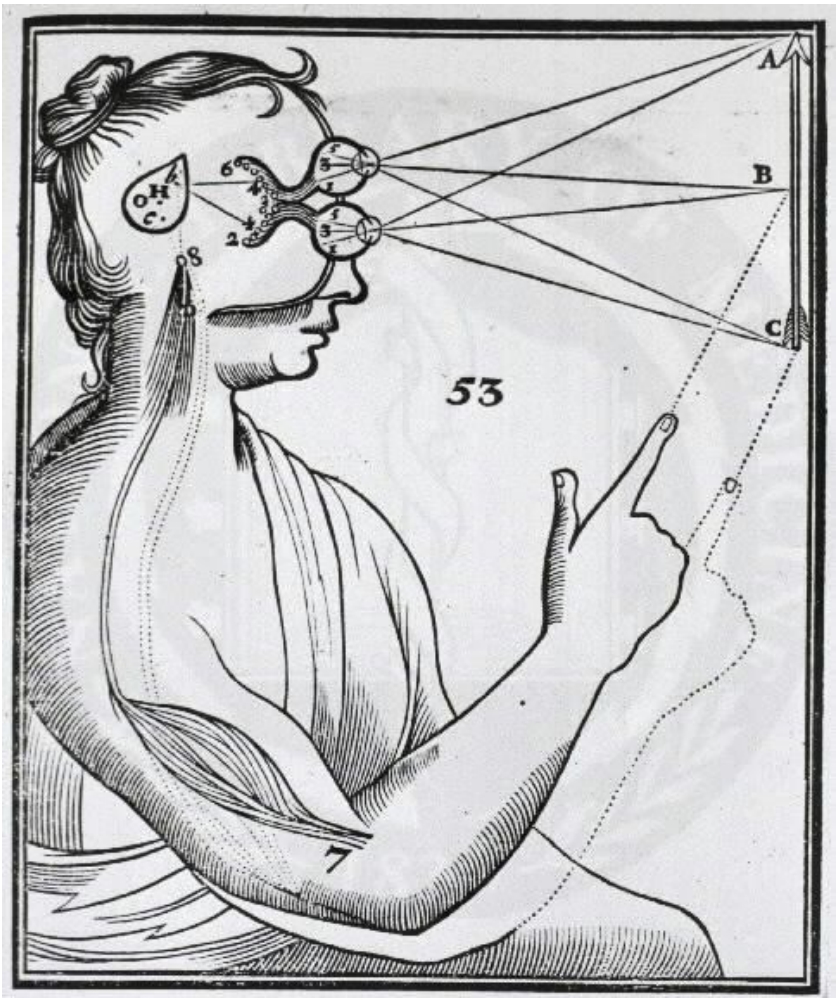

FIGURE 1 Descartes, *Illustrating the Theory That Perceptions Travel From The Eyes To The Pineal Gland, Which Then Allows 'Humors' To Pass To The Muscles To Produce Response*, 1664, woodcut, in *Treatise of Man*.

[15] René Descartes, *Discourse on Method* (New York: Macmillan, 1986.)

Descartes himself was a Renaissance man, as he contributed not only to metaphysical philosophy and the natural sciences, but also to physics, mathematics, optics (Fig. 1), meteorology, and physiology.[16] However, while his influence extended throughout many disciplines, he attempted to prove that *geometry could be used to explain all natural phenomena*. He and other Renaissance thinkers strived to illuminate the world through order, paving the path towards Modernity, where man could know the ways of the world through observation and deductive reasoning.

The scientific method was established during the Enlightenment, born from Renaissance belief in reason. Empiricism became man's tool for *progress*. It was during this time that many Europeans thinkers created their own theories of government, largely based around democracy, in reaction to the unraveling Christian monarchies that ruled them. Adam Smith wrote *The Wealth of Nations*, the cornerstone of capitalist economics, advocating for a free market. Ideas of freedom and justice in the Enlightenment went hand in hand with the scientific revolution. Even Voltaire, known for his satirical critiques of Christian institutions' intolerance and dogma, advocated the ideal of the *philosopher-king*, a ruler who uses reason to impose "unity in the chaos of society."[17]

From the Renaissance through the Enlightenment, we can see the foundations for government, economy, and life ruled by systems of order — coupled with a firm belief that order can be found through human reasoning and empirical observation.

[16] Sorell, Tom. *Descartes: A Very Short Introduction*. Very Short Introductions. Oxford: OUP Oxford, 2000.
[17] Cranston, Maurice. "Ideas and Ideologies." *History Today* 39, no. 5 (May 1989): 10.

However, when asked about the Modern Project, sociologist Zygmunt Bauman stated two main dangers: 1) the compulsive and unceasing ambition of modernization, leading to unprecedented destruction and 2) the hegemonic philosophy of modernity, in which the ruling party lives comfortably at the expense of others.[18] We can observe these dangers unfolding upon examination of modern times following the Modern Project.

Modernity

As Renaissance and Enlightenment thinkers paved the path towards cosmological changes, societal changes followed: the end of monarchical government, the separation of church and state, the rise of industrialism, the creation of a world market, and the opportunity for socioeconomic and geographic mobility. Progress not only became conceptually *possible*, but became the ultimate goal — for individuals, businesses, and nations. Steam and combustion engines, electricity, canals, railways, steel, coal, and the assembly line completely changed the shape of civilization. Manufacturing became the basis of the economy.

However, with progress came the "complementary notion of decline."[19] The industrial world laid waste to the environment and its employees (who were sometimes children), bureaucracy protected unjust leaders at the top of hegemonic institutions, and wars were fought using military technologies that caused unprecedented damage.

[18] Tabet, Simone. "Interview with Zygmunt Bauman: From the Modern Project to the Liquid World." *Theory, Culture, and Society* 34, no. 7-8 (2017): 131–146. https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276417734902

[19] Mouzakitis, Angelos. "Modernity and the Idea of Progress." *Frontiers in Sociology* 2, March 2017, https://doi.org/10.3389/fsoc.2017.00003.

People were jammed into urban environments that were hothouses for disease and crime. In the words of Michel Foucault, “wars are no longer waged in the name of a sovereign who must be defended; they are waged on behalf of the existence of everyone; entire populations are mobilized for the purpose of wholesale slaughter in the name of life necessity: massacres have become vital.”[20] Though rags-to-riches stories rang through the streets, individuals were still oppressed by inescapable systems of order which they were obligated to uphold.

These rapid changes, along with their consequences, presented new challenges and opportunities for designers. At a time of mass urban growth in the U.S., landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted and architect Frank Lloyd Wright “affirmed the necessity for Americans to live in a way that allowed close contact with nature in spite of accelerating urbanization.”[21] Olmsted’s naturalistic landscape design style is still reproduced today, but the philosophical and moral convictions behind his design style were specific to the time period — a direct expression of the state of Modernity in which he and the rest of the population then lived. He believed that “improving the physical environment… was an essential action towards the protection of public health,”[22] and thus a modern mission of landscape architecture. Unlike pastoral landscape design styles, which merely upheld the nostalgic aesthetic beauty of the countryside, Olmsted’s designs were a reflection of changing times and how landscape architecture could

[20] Michel Foucault, “Right of Death and Power over Life,” in *The History of Sexuality*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Random House, 1978), 137.

[21] Howett, "Modernism and American Landscape Architecture," 26.

[22] Bonj Szczygiel and Robert Hewitt, “Nineteenth-Century Medical Landscapes: John H. Rauch, Frederick Law Olmsted, and the Search for Salubrity,” *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 74, no. 4 (Winter 200): 721.

intervene with the forces of urbanization and industrialization, then and into the future. Central Park, perhaps his most famous project, continues to be a place of refuge for city-dwellers amongst the chaos and pollution of New York City (Fig. 2). Landscape architecture, through modernity, was no longer limited to private villas owned by a wealthy aristocracy, but spread into the public realm, integrated into the fabric of the city streets.

FIGURE 2 *Aerial View of Central Park*, 1938, photograph, The New York City Department of Parks & Recreation, New York.

Frank Lloyd Wright, in his own style of *organic architecture*, believed that buildings were meant to be a part of nature. Rather than Olmsted's approach of

integrating nature into the city, Wright attempted to integrate the built world into nature. His attention to *genius loci*, or spirit of a place, reflected his admiration for the landscapes on which his projects were built. Though ambitious and certainly prolific, there is a lack of accessibility in Wright's expression of Modernity. Most of his projects had the luxury of being built on unspoilt land — he even "urged his clients to flee the cities,"[23] rejecting the reality that the majority of the US population was subject to urban living. He used modern building materials, such as glass and concrete, but his buildings did not proactively adapt to the sociological state of Modernity. Though he admired nature and its processes, Wright focused most on the act of *creating a built structure* rather than protecting the environment that was being ravaged by industrial forces, as well as the people subject to those environments.

Expressions of Modernity may have differed amongst individuals, but the ability for those expressions to be shared and circulated is a circumstance of Modernity itself. Advancements in technology brought about a new level of media circulation, at a mass level through newspapers and at an individual level through telegraphs and telephones. Transportation innovations allowed the common citizen to travel and meet new people and influences, spanning from daily commute to international travel. As people and ideas circulated, alongside the unprecedented societal changes and new ways of life, Modernism was born.

[23] Howett, "Modernism and American Landscape Architecture," 26.

Modernism

People began seeing the world in new and different ways as the norms of society drastically changed during modern times. Things moved at a faster pace, new horizons were within reach, and new materials and technologies were available for experimentation. The nature of existing in the world and the value of order were questioned and explored, leading to the philosophical enquiries of existentialism and nihilism. Theorists like Darwin shattered previous conceptions of how we came to be with his theory of evolution. Marx led followers to question whether or not they were actually free in a labor-driven economic system, despite the ideals of freedom held dearly in the Modern project. Freud posed the question of how much control we truly have over our thoughts or actions, and how much was driven by unconscious motivations. Einstein's theory of relativity reconceptualized the relationship between time and space. Nietzsche asserted that "God is dead... and we have killed him"[24] in reference to replacing the role of religion with systems of order, for better or worse.

Amidst these paradigm shifts, Western art began to look and sound very different. Previously in art and design history, one could associate a particular *style* with a *place and time period*. For example, one may refer to sixteenth century Italian painting and know that the style was High Renaissance and/or Mannerism. That changed in modern times. "Modern art" could refer to styles of fauvism, cubism, surrealism, and more. To additionally complicate matters, the time period of Modernism is up for debate.

[24] Friedrich Nietzsche, "125" in *The Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1974), 181.

While styles and time periods may differ, a common theme in Modernist art and design is **abstraction**. Abstraction can take many forms, but its key trait is that it is *not representational*. In painting, styles moved away from realistic portrayals of narratives and events that had endured through the Renaissance and Enlightenment. For example, Cubist paintings played with geometry, proportion, and color rather than narrative content. There was often a drive to find the *purest* exploration of a medium. Art critic Clement Greenberg, when speaking of Modernism, stated that "each art had to determine, through its own operations and works, the effects exclusive to itself."[25] We can observe this in Modernist architecture through explorations of *volume* and *spatial arrangement* (both elements specific to architecture) often executed in an open plan set on a grid. Neoclassical and Beaux-Arts design traditions, especially their emphasis on axial symmetry, started to seem nostalgic and outdated.

A primary source of Modern design thinking was the Bauhaus, the German arts school active from 1919 to 1933. Founded after World War I, it had a spirit of radical experimentation, especially after German artists had observed the horrors and destruction of the war, as well as the suppression of the arts prior to the war. Three prevailing design traits associated with the Bauhaus were simple geometries, blending of mass production and artistic vision, and functional forms (Fig. 3).

[25] Clement Greenberg, "Modernist Painting," in *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays of Criticism*, ed. John O'Brian (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 86.

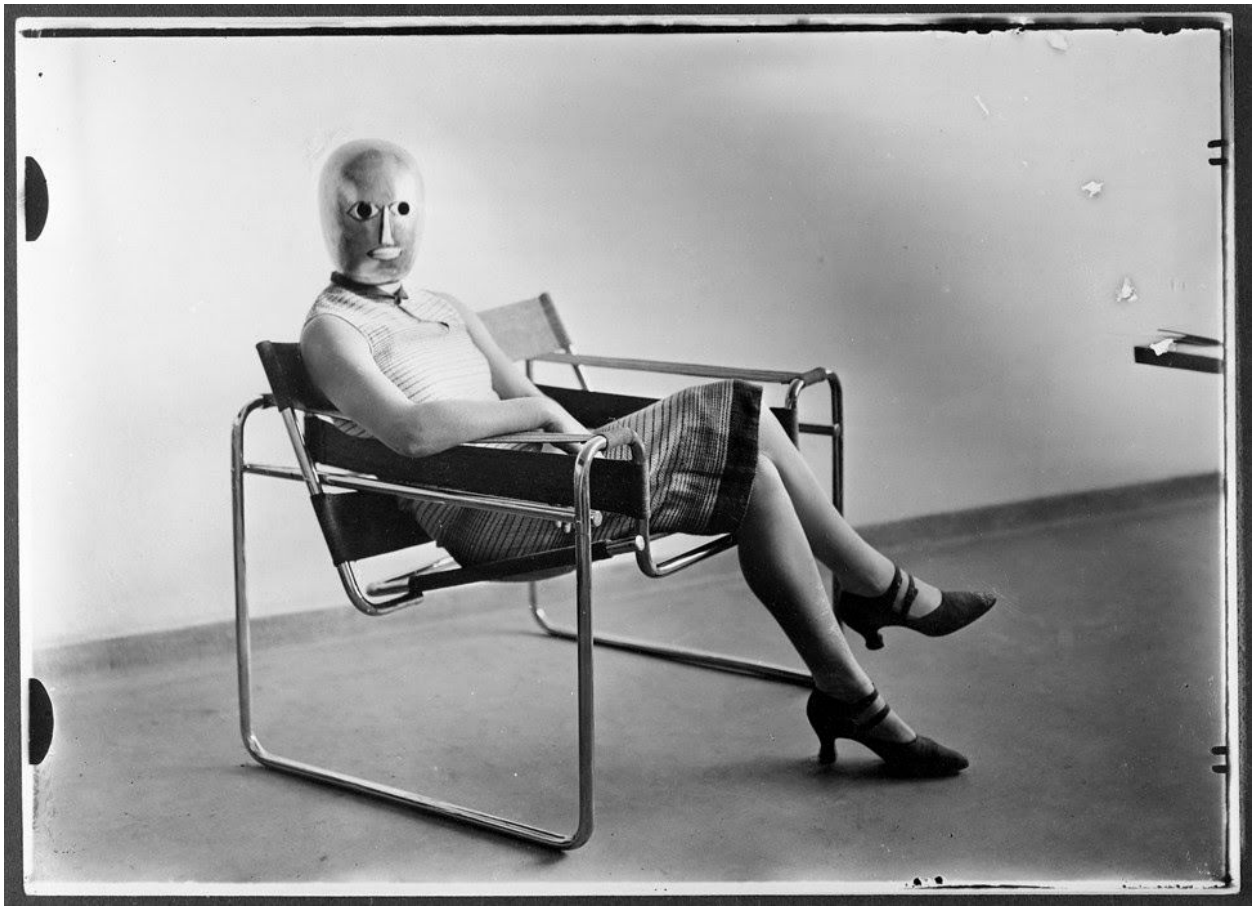

FIGURE 3 Erich Consemüller, *Woman wearing a theatrical mask by Oskar Schlemmer and seated on Marcel Breuer's B3 chair*, 1926, photograph, Bauhaus-Archiv, Berlin.

In the spirit of Modernity, rationality and standardization were emphasized. New Objectivity was a movement in which the Bauhaus was involved, which advocated for healthy and functional minimalist dwellings for the average citizen (Fig. 4). Whether or not the Bauhaus was explicitly tied to politics is up for debate. Walter Gropius, architect and founder of the Bauhaus, claimed that the school and its designs were apolitical,[26] echoing the Kantian Enlightenment ideal of the disinterested observer. However, the drive to bring functional dwelling to the masses, with designs made to meet the needs of

[26] Richard J. Evans, *Coming of the Third Reich* (New York: Penguin Press, 2004), 416.

a changing society, seems inherently political. Regardless of whether it was political or not, function was married to form and responded to the new Modern reality.

FIGURE 4 Alexander Savin, *Aerial view of the Horseshoe Block in Berlin, Looking West*, 2017, photograph, Wikimedia Commons, https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/9/90/Berlin_Hufeisensiedlung_UAV_04-2017.jpg/1920px-Berlin_Hufeisensiedlung_UAV_04-2017.jpg

The International Style, a term coined by Museum of Modern Art curators Philip Johnson (himself an American modern architect) and Henry-Russell Hitchcock in 1932, is also synonymous with Modernist design and modern architecture, as well as the Bauhaus. The Getty Institute describes the International Style as “characterized by an emphasis on volume over mass, the use of lightweight, mass-produced, industrial

materials, rejection of all ornament and color, repetitive modular forms, and the use of flat surfaces, typically alternating with areas of glass".[27] Notable architects in the movement include Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, final director of the Bauhaus before its closing in 1933 due to Nazi pressures (Fig. 5); Richard Neutra, California architect known for flexible multifunctional spaces; and J.J.P. Oud, Dutch architect of the minimalist De Stijl movement.

FIGURE 5 Carol Highsmith, *Exterior of Mies Van der Rohe's 1951 Farnsworth House in Plano, IL*, photograph, National Trust for Historic Preservation, https://farnsworthhouse.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/FH-2005.1-e1578073648450.jpg.

The style spread throughout the world after World War I, and continued to be a predominant style of architecture until the 1970s. While many art historians consider the chronological end of most modern art movements as either in the 1930s or at the end of

[27] "International Style (modern European architectural style)," Art & Architecture Thesaurus Online, Getty Institute, last modified January 26, 2012, http://vocab.getty.edu/page/aat/300021472.

World War II in 1945, modern architecture seems to have a later starting date as well as a later ending date.

Setting the Stage for Modernism in Landscape Architecture

Though designed landscapes had been created and celebrated for centuries, the discipline of landscape architecture had not been established until the advent of Modernity. The term "landscape architecture" was coined in 1828 by Gilbert Laing Meason in his book *On The Landscape Architecture of the Great Painters of Italy*, published in London. It was later adopted in 1840 by John Claudius Loudon, a Scottish landscape planner, botanist and author. As new public landscapes were being developed, "at the moment when Loudon first used the term 'landscape architecture… he had laid down a vision of a kind of urbanism through public open space and 'living museums' of trees."[28] Loudon advocated for the use of the term because titles like "gardener" and "horticulturist" were no longer apt for the compositional landscapes being created for public use. The first designers to professionally use the title of landscape architect were Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux, who practiced from the mid- to late-1800s. As mass urbanization and industrialism rose during this time period, Olmsted's naturalistic design style was a direct response to the lifestyle and spatial changes of Modernity, serving as a place to maintain public health and sanity within the urban fabric. In a historical sense, landscape architecture can be considered a specifically modern profession.

---

[28] Mark Laird, "John Claudius Loudon (1783-1843) and the Field's Identity," *Studies in the History of Gardens & Designed Landscapes* 34, no. 3 (Jul-Sept 2014): 251.

Though Olmsted's designs were an expression of Modernity, his style is rarely considered Modernist. His naturalistic landscapes do not fall in line with the aesthetics of the Bauhaus or International Style, as those styles began decades after his career's end. Examples of Modernist design are typically sourced from the discipline of architecture, and the canon of landscape architecture theory was limited in this time period. The Bauhaus had no landscape architecture program. In most modern sites, the landscape was of little concern, existing as a mere afterthought to accompany the modern building. Even in modernist Frank Lloyd Wright's designs, though he shared the aim of Olmsted to connect people back to nature, the designed landscape was not primary to the overall design. Built structures were the ultimate focal point. Built landscapes became more and more prevalent as the majority of the population moved away from rural life and more land was developed. Though previous popular aesthetics of landscapes had been pastoral or picturesque, these types of landscapes were becoming less relevant within densely populated areas. Beaux-Arts style gardens were still popular during the early 20th century, while modern architecture aimed away from this tradition.

The first canonical landscape architecture theory book, *An Introduction to the Study of Landscape Design* was written by Theodora Kimball Hubbard, first librarian of the Harvard School of Landscape Architecture from 1911-1924, and her husband Henry Vincent Hubbard, Harvard professor of landscape architecture who had been taught by Olmsted's son. It states that "the modern landscape architect has in the examples of the styles of the past a treasury of inspiration and information to aid him in his

present work; but he should study these styles not as an archaeologist, not as a copyist, but as a workman providing himself with tools for future original use."[29] This early description still focused on existing traditions, while other modern design and art aimed to create a new style. However, this mention of traditions is of little surprise in a text that acted as the first available textbook of landscape architecture.

It is worth noting, instead, two other aspects of the textbook that speak more to new ideologies within landscape architecture. First is the idea of unity in design. While unity in not an uncommon or novel design aspect, the way that it is discussed in this text is especially modern:

> Man lives in and is part of an organized universe. All the impressions which he receives, all the objects which he learns to recognize, all his ideas, have organization as their constant essential characteristic, and the completeness and kind of this organization might well be the source of his pleasure in them.[30]

The idea of an "organized universe" of which man is a part is a notably modern conception of the world. In this description, a unified design connects to humankind and to the infinite. The second idea that is notably modern (and quite novel) is the concept of the *landscape effect*. As the discipline of psychology was established in the modern age, this piece of landscape architecture theory questions designed landscapes' psychological role, defining a landscape effect as "the total reaction which the

---

[29] Henry Vincent Hubbard and Theodora Kimball Hubbard, *An Introduction to the Study of Landscape Design* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1917), 59.
[30] Hubbard and Kimball, *An Introduction to the Study of Landscape Design*, 16.

perception of a landscape may have upon a man."[31] Olmsted took this into account during his practice, noting that naturalistic landscapes can have therapeutic and spiritual benefits. These two ideas do not prescribe specific design vocabularies, but instead take into account the modern state of mind.

Thirteen years after Hubbard & Kimball's publication of *An Introduction to the Study of Landscape Design*, Fletcher Steele was one of the first landscape architects to write specifically about the Modernist movement. His article "New Pioneering in Garden Design" was published in 1930, several years before Rose enrolled at Harvard's Graduate School of Design. He believed that art should be viewed from a new perspective,[32] and quoted Russian esotericist P. D. Ouspensky's statement that "in art, we have already the first experiments in a language of the future."[33] Many designers had been inspired by the Modernist art movement. Steele wrote that Modernist art expressed an "expanded sense" of dimensions, space, relativity, time, movement, color, vibration, self, and the significance of life.[34] This was particularly potent due to scientific and mathematical discoveries of the time. Steele noted that expressions of Modernism could be seen in landscape design through new materials and technologies, strong geometric forms, emphasis on volume, and abandoning axial symmetry and "informal" design.

---

[31] Hubbard and Kimball, *An Introduction to the Study of Landscape Design*, 76.

[32] Fletcher Steele, "New Pioneering in Garden Design," *Landscape Architecture* 20, no. 3 (April 1930): 159.

[33] P. D. Ouspensky, *Tertium Organum* (Rochester: Manas Press, 1920), 83.

[34] Steele, "New Pioneering in Garden Design," 161-162.

Steele had attended the 1925 Exposition des Arts Décoratifs, a world's fair held in Paris aimed to highlight the new *style moderne* in design, later known as "Art Deco." As a design style, Art Deco had been greatly influenced by Modernist art styles of fauvism and cubism, among other factors. Steele had observed new landscape design experiments at the Paris Exposition, especially those involving modern materials and technologies. For example, architect Robert Mallet-Stevens utilized concrete to create geometrical tree sculptures in a garden design rather than installing living trees. Additionally, Armenian architect Gabriel Guevrekian designed a Cubist-inspired triangular garden with tiered reflecting pools and plantings. An illuminated sphere had been placed in the center of the garden, and light from the sphere reflected on the pools as the sphere rotated. In regards to Guevrekian's design, Steele noted that strong geometric shapes had the potential to make garden elements more volumetric, stating that "the beds are not flat, but pyramidal or tilted at various angles, so that the usual loss of interest in a flat pattern in perspective is minimized and a way indicated by which vertical dimensions may play a major part in future garden design."[35] Steele predicted that volume and three-dimensional design would be emphasized in Modernist landscape design.

The rotating illuminated sphere in Guevrekian's garden design added movement to "what would otherwise be an altogether stiff pattern." Similarly, Steele mentioned Pierre du Pont's illuminated water theaters, where "the constantly changing numbers, shapes and sizes of the fountains, lighted from beneath by constantly modulating color"

[35] Steele, "New Pioneering in Garden Design," 166.
[36] Steele, "New Pioneering in Garden Design," 166.

[37] expressed change over time. The Modern world had new understandings of time, whether through Einstein's theory of relativity or through technologies that created rapid transportation and manufacturing. Through the train window, one could view the landscape slip by at an unprecedented pace, much like the frames in a film. New technologies had the capacity to create movement within the physical world as well as the art and design world.

In his article, Steele had mentioned topics that would later become key points in Rose's work, which are discussed at length in the next chapter. First, Steele anticipated Rose's critiques of Beaux Arts design vocabulary, recognizing "the strong modern trend away from symmetrical axial treatment."[38] He also noted that the term "formal" would become irrelevant in Modernist gardens, and described the term "informal" as a "ghastly word excellently describing many an amorphous work of landscape architecture."[39] These sentiments would be echoed throughout Rose's work, especially in his *Pencil Points* articles during the late 1930s. Furthermore, Steele anticipated Rose's fusion of shelter and landscape. When describing French architect Tony Garnier's residence, Steele stated that "house and garden are not separated, as we usually see them, but each are obvious parts of a unified whole — which is a return to the best traditions of the past, rather than a new thing."[40] Rose's integration of "landscape" and "architecture" was not a new concept, both in the context of Modernist design as well as design in general. The idea of a "unified whole" could be attributed to ideologies established

[37] Steele, "New Pioneering in Garden Design," 165.
[38] Steele, "New Pioneering in Garden Design,"163.
[39] Steele, "New Pioneering in Garden Design,"163.
[40] Steele, "New Pioneering in Garden Design," 163.

during the Modern Project, but it was also present in many cosmologies and traditions around the world, including Japanese tradition and Zen Buddhism.

Some would argue that rejection of tradition is a key aspect of Modernism. Landscape historian Marc Treib identified six axioms for a Modern landscape, and the first axiom was "a denial of historical styles."[41] I would argue that this is an overstatement. While many Modernists critiqued Western traditions in art and design, some were also inspired by existing traditions (Western and non-Western) that aligned with their philosophical values, applying these values in their Modernist experimentation. Landscape architect Christopher Tunnard opened his polemical book *Gardens in the Modern Landscape* by discussing the relationship of *tradition* and *experiment* in art, stating that, "in the art of garden and landscape design the two are easily reconciled."[42] Experimentation was required within the unprecedented conditions of rapid urbanization, but ideological concepts of previous centuries had paved the path towards the changes of Modernity. Tunnard wrote about the formation of a Modern style, stating, "it will not be very different from the humanised landscape tradition of the eighteenth century, but… it will, nevertheless, be based on broader conceptions of nature and of art."[43] These "broader conceptions" are similar to the "expanded sense" that Steele described in regards to Modernist art, especially in relation to new scientific and mathematical discoveries. Darwin's theory of evolution greatly affected views on nature, portraying it as a dynamic force rather than a static state. Meanwhile, beyond

[41] Treib, "Axioms for a Modern Landscape Architecture," 53.
[42] Christopher Tunnard, *Gardens in the Modern Landscape* (London: Architectural Press, 1948), 5.
[43] Tunnard, *Gardens in the Modern Landscape*, 5.

paradigmatic shifts, the societal conditions of the past centuries differed vastly from those of Modernity. Tunnard stated that "the garden landscape, which is the England of the eighteenth century, is disappearing" and that landscape designers must create "a new landscape for the twentieth century."[44] Even if Modernist designers decided to draw from traditions, those traditions would be expressed within the new landscape of modern living, giving them new meaning.

Tunnard's *Gardens in the Modern Landscape* was originally published as a series of articles in *Architectural Review* from October 1937 through September 1938. It was cited by Rose, Kiley, and Eckbo as a major influence for their work, and inspired their rebellion against the landscape architecture curriculum at Harvard's Graduate School of Design, described in further detail in the next chapter. After his expulsion from Harvard, Rose soon began publishing his own articles on Modernism. Tunnard had listed *three primary sources* of inspiration for the Modern designer — functionalism, the oriental influence, and modern art.[45] Indeed, throughout Rose's writings, all three sources are evident. Furthermore, Tunnard was one of the first published proponents of *functionalism in the landscape*, stating that "we need gardens for rest, recreation and aesthetic pleasure; how, then, can we neglect the art that makes them rational, economical, restful, and comprehensible?"[46] This sentiment is echoed almost exactly in Rose's *Pencil Points* articles, as well as his articles with Kiley and Eckbo. While most of Rose's designs were constructed after World War II, his pre-war writings can be placed

[44] Tunnard, *Gardens in the Modern Landscape*, 5.
[45] Tunnard, *Gardens in the Modern Landscape*, 69
[46] Tunnard, *Gardens in the Modern Landscape*, 76

within a movement of Modernist landscape writing established by other landscape architects in the 1930s. The written works of Fletcher Steele and Christopher Tunnard expressed Modernism in a way that was inseparable from their landscape design works. They were acutely aware of the precipice in time that Modernity presented, and spoke of ways in which landscape design could progress.

It is absolutely imperative to consider that modern ideologies, coupled with the rapid and unprecedented changes in society, are what shaped Modernism. Rapid industrialization, urbanization, and capitalism created new lifestyles, new technologies, and new values. This is all expressed in the Modernist works of the 19th and 20th centuries, though styles of these works may have differed. Landscape design played an entirely new role in the modern era, especially with the advent of designed public outdoor spaces. One could assert that the profession of landscape architecture is a modern invention. Rather than defining Modernist landscape architecture through a single design vocabulary or style, we must consider the **function** of modern landscape design forms, the **ideologies** from which they are rooted, and the way they **express Modernity**.

CHAPTER 2: The Works and Ideas of James Rose

Modernist art and architectural styles had gained momentum earlier in Europe than in the U.S. This could be attributed to the effects of World War I on European land and citizens, the differences in urban and industrial development in Europe versus in the relatively young U.S., and other factors. Efforts began in the 1930s to accelerate the Modernist movement in the U.S. The 1932 Museum of Modern Art exhibition on the International Style, curated by Philip Johnson and Henry-Russell Hitchcock, was one major U.S. step in the Modernist direction. In 1936, Harvard founded the Graduate School of Design (GSD), consolidating programs in architecture, urban planning, and landscape architecture. Walter Gropius of the Bauhaus became the chair of the Department of Architecture. As many of his fellow designers fled Nazi Germany, Gropius invited them to join the faculty at Harvard's GSD. Together, they aimed to revitalize the Harvard curriculum and continue the teachings of Bauhaus Modernism in the U.S.

James Rose was admitted to the landscape architecture program at GSD upon its establishment. At this time, the landscape architecture program was still taught primarily in the Beaux Arts tradition. Harvard had the nation's first professional landscape architecture course in 1893, and the program was established in 1900 by Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., son of Frederick Law Olmsted. The first landscape

architecture textbook came out of Harvard in 1917, written by Theodora Hubbard Kimball and her husband Henry Vincent Hubbard. The discipline was still very young, and the examination of design forms from famous European gardens of the past and in the Beaux Arts style was a helpful tool for creating some kind of pedagogy. Modernist architects had little to say about the landscape at this point. The Bauhaus had no landscape design program, and so the Bauhaus teachings had not been assimilated into Harvard GSD's landscape architecture curriculum.

With Gropius came Modernist ideals of volume over mass, new materiality, rejection of ornament, and modular forms. In tandem with urban planning, there were also ideals on how to deal with rapid urbanization and more dense populations. Rose and his friends, Garrett Eckbo and Dan Kiley, whom many of us know today for their legacies in landscape architecture, had been inspired by the Modernist movement in art and design. Unsatisfied with the absence of Modernism in their own program, despite their emphasis within the neighboring programs at GSD, the students revolted. At the same time, landscape architect Christopher Tunnard began publishing articles in the *Architectural Review* questioning the value of previous traditions in landscape architecture and advocating instead for functionalism. Rose was expelled in Spring 1937 for his rebellion as a student, but he quickly took after Tunnard and began publishing in *Pencil Points* magazine under a two-year contract.

Rose's articles do not focus on a particular style of landscape architecture, but instead discuss the changes in life and society that have come alongside Modernity and how landscape architects can effectively respond to those changes. He critiqued the

Beaux Arts style for its lack of relevance to Modern life, advocated for the marriage of form and function, drew from Modern architects' examination of materiality, and stressed the need for integration between indoor and outdoor spaces. The ideals in these articles (as well as further writings are evident in his built works through **three key design elements**: fusion of shelter and landscape, private outdoor spaces, and creative use of everyday materials. In his writings and in his works, he draws from design ideals of functional spatial arrangements, economy/efficiency of space and materials, and design forms emerging from adaptation to a site. He often improvised his designs on site, allowing the existing grade and materials to shape the unfolding design process over time, rather than adhering to a predetermined plan drafted on paper.

Critique of the Beaux Arts Tradition

Rose was anything but subtle in his scorn for the Beaux Arts tradition. Regarding the state of landscape architecture at the time, he stated that "our grave is on axis in a Beaux-Arts Cemetery."[47] While most of his contention with the Beaux Arts revolved around the necessity of strict axial organization, he was irritated by other aspects of Beaux Arts design vocabulary, such as symmetry and asymmetry, as well as formality and informality.[48] None of these design elements addressed the chaos and labor of modern living conditions.

Rose questioned the benefit of an axial arrangement (especially in regards to an economy of space, as well as the usefulness of historicism and regal elegance. Axial

[47] Rose, "Freedom in the Garden," 640.
[48] James C. Rose, "Articulate Form in Landscape Design," *Pencil Points*, February 1939, 98.

symmetry did little more than provide aesthetic grandeur. In regards to how the axis had been used in modern times, he stated, "...The great tree-lined avenues and memorial parks terminating the axes are not satisfactory... Neither serves nor expresses the lives of the people in its environs."[49] People could walk along the avenues and observe each other, but not do much else. Furthermore, he described:

> If you wish to consider any line of sight an axis, then you have an infinite number of axes in a garden or anywhere else, and so it should be. By selecting one or two axes and developing a picture from a given station point, we are losing an infinity of opportunities. The axial approach merely harks back to elegant facade and two-dimensional design of the sixteenth century. Such elegance fitted the society of Louis XIV, but has no relation to our own. We no longer design buildings like Mansard. Why should we design gardens or even world fairs like Le Nôtre? No one would think of furnishing a room in the principle of the axis. You do not expect to stand at one end and find the aesthetic composition at the other. You want a sense of proper division and interest from any point. So with gardens: it is fundamentally wrong to begin with axes or shapes in plan; ground forms evolve from a division of space.[50]

Landscape design, in modern times, was no longer limited in access to royalty and aristocracy. Rose found it unreasonable and inefficient to continue design styles that

[49] James C. Rose, Daniel Kiley, and Garrett Eckbo, "Landscape Design in the Urban Environment," *Architectural Record*, May 1939.
[50] Rose, "Freedom in the Garden," 642.

had their foundations based in predetermined, two-dimensional forms aimed at decoration and grandeur.

Even within the Beaux Arts context of creating garden “rooms”, the emphasis on axial arrangement and decorative forms created no useful space. Instead, they created a pictorial scene to be visually regarded from a limited space. This was not adequate for the modern lifestyle, which required outdoor recreation and leisure as an escape from urban work life. In describing useful landscape design, Rose, with Kiley and Eckbo, stated that “the technics are more complicated than in Beaux Arts patterns, but we thereby achieve volumes of organized space in which people live and play, rather than stand and look.”[51] Modern lifestyles and recreation needed meaningful and functional design, rather than pictorial grandness.

Finally, another critique that Rose described in relation to the Beaux-Arts was its lack of appreciation for plants, the main material associated with landscape design. He stated:

> The Beaux-Arts system — and it seems incredible that practically every landscape school in the country is bound by it — has an amazing scorn for plants. They seem to be totally dissociated from design, and a knowledge of them a matter of indifference.[52]

In the spirit of Modernism, Rose believed that the materiality associated with a medium is one of its most important aspects. Plants are what separate landscape architecture from other spatial media, such as architecture and sculpture. Furthermore, plants are

[51] Rose, Kiley, and Eckbo, “Landscape Design in the Urban Environment.”
[52] Rose, “Freedom in the Garden,” 642.

unique in comparison to most other materials because they are alive, their forms can be loose and highly variable, and they change over time. He named other factors specific to landscape design (e.g. emphasis on horizontal circulation, and a large design scale that included the sky and surrounding country,)[53] but ultimately, plants alone were the biggest difference in media, and so he believed that they must be regarded with individual respect and attention rather than as a design afterthought.

Ultimately, Rose believed that the Beaux Arts tradition was inappropriate and inadequate in meeting the needs of modern life. Its emphasis on axes and other nonfunctional design elements, its styles of historicism and regalness, and its scorn for plants — the main material of landscape design — were not useful in the context of Modernity and the future of landscape design. As he stated:

> The grand manner of axes, vistas, and facades has been found out for what it is — a decorative covering for, but no solution to, the real problem. Contemporary landscape design is finding its standards in relation to the new needs of urban society. The approach has shifted, as in building, from the grand manner of axes and facades to specific needs and specific forms to express those needs.[54]

The Beaux Arts style forms were decorative rather than functional. Seeing no use for decoration, Rose theorized solutions to problems in modern living, describing a “new mental atmosphere” from which these problems emerged:

[53] Rose, “Freedom in the Garden,” 639.
[54] Rose, Kiley, and Eckbo, “Landscape Design in the Urban Environment.”

> Contemporary design represents a change in kind, a change in conception, the expression of a new mentality we have derived from the effects of the industrial and economic revolutions. These revolutions have the significance for our civilization that the discoveries of Galileo, Copernicus, and Magellan had for the Renaissance. They have put a transparent but impenetrable screen between us and the past, and we find ourselves in a new mental atmosphere… The only direct stimulus we can get from the past is an understanding of how the social and psychological influences led a particular civilization to arrive at its peculiar expressions. We should do the same for our own civilization and seek to express it.[55]

Rose believed that to be able to understand society's needs and desires, it was necessary to understand its social and psychological influences. As the Beaux Arts lost relevance, what became relevant for him was the relationship of landscape architecture and Modernity itself, emerging from the industrial and economic revolutions of the past century.

A New Mental Atmosphere

In his writings, James Rose spoke of cosmological shifts within Modernity in tandem with functional changes in modern life. Rose spoke of nature, biology, natural resources, industrialism, agriculture, aesthetics, city planning, scientific deduction, and

[55] Rose, "Freedom in the Garden," 641-642.

the development of systems. All of these topics coalesced within the advent of Modernity, giving rise to the societal context he observed during his lifetime.

As Tunnard had predicted, Modernist landscape design would be affected by broader conceptions of nature. Rose believed that the idea of the untouched nature could no longer exist due to modern industrialization and urbanization, and this was why society needed landscape architecture. He stated that,

> Wherever man goes, we find a reorganization of nature. This fact is the sole justification for the profession of landscape design, and our job is to provide a more skillful arrangement for greater utility and for the expression or contemporary living.[56]

According to Rose, the "reorganization of nature" had various causes related to Modernity, within and without the urban context. Rose, Kiley, and Eckbo stated that "man's central effort — the exploitation of all mineral, plant animal, and insect forms for his own social welfare — has taken two forms, industrial and agricultural production."[57] While the term "exploitation" implies a negative connotation, they also admired the utility behind the decisions of farmers, which contrasted the aesthetic ideals they had been taught while studying landscape architecture. They noted:

> The farmer has no preconceived ideas of form; he uses all available knowledge and technics to meet a given need; he plants and cultivates

[56] Rose, "Articulate Form in Landscape Design," 98.
[57] Rose, Kiley, and Eckbo, "Landscape Design in the Urban Environment."

> without abstract theories of design or beauty. He is interested in the maximum production for the minimum expenditure of time and effort.[58]

Rose may have been influenced by his studies in agriculture at Cornell during the early 1930s before coming to Harvard.[59] Plants were regarded very differently in practices of agriculture than in traditions of landscape design. The efficiency with which farmers cultivated plants relied on scientific deduction: if one could observe a crop's maximum production in a particular way that involved minimal time/effort, that method should be adopted. Rose translated this idea to inform landscape design, stating that, "economy and expediency in producing useful landscapes revolve on three major factors in planning: maintenance, plant control, and grading."[60] He believed that design forms that emerged from the most efficient considerations of these three factors on a site were more useful than forms inspired by abstract design aesthetics, such as those of the Beaux Arts.

Alongside efficiency, another strong influence on Rose's conception of modern living was Darwin's theory of evolution. His conception of mankind's adaptations, leading to Modernity, shaped his interpretation of the role of Modernist landscape architecture. He, Kiley and Eckbo stated:

> All organisms seek the natural environment most favorable to the complete development of their species, and where nature fails to meet the biologic necessities, adaptation of either environment or organism must

[58] Rose, Kiley, and Eckbo, "Landscape Design in the Urban Environment."
[59] Cardasis, *James Rose: A Voice Offstage*, 30.
[60] James C. Rose, "Why Not Try Science," *Pencil Points*, December 1939, 777.

> occur for life to continue.... The environmental adaptation of man is infinitely complicated by his own half-social, half-individual makeup, his uneven evolutionary development, and his distribution over every variety of geographic, topographic, and climatic conditions.[61]

In this excerpt, they implied that humans, unlike most other species, have the ability to manipulate the environment to adapt it to their needs or desires. While the environment will adapt on its own in response to change, humans have affected environmental change in all parts of the globe through their enterprises, intentionally and unintentionally. As mentioned before, he believed that two main enterprises behind these environmental changes were industrial and agricultural production. They went on to state:

> ... As productivity rose, necessary labor time decreased: time for play as well as work became a reality for the average man. This, in turn, posed a new problem: the *absolute necessity* for and the *real possibility* of man's controlling his environment for his pleasure as well as his labor, for recreation as well as production. This wide expanding need of society for planned recreational environments offers tremendous new opportunities to landscape designer and building designer alike.[62]

Here, Rose, Kiley, and Eckbo tied together concepts of human evolution, environmental adaptation, labor productivity, and landscape architecture. Recreation emerged in

[61] Rose, Kiley, and Eckbo, "Landscape Design in the Urban Environment."
[62] Rose, Kiley, and Eckbo, "Landscape Design in the Urban Environment."

Modernity as a behavior related to labor efficiency, and landscape designers could plan outdoor recreational areas to “adapt” to this new modern behavior. The concept of adaptation materializes in various ways throughout Rose’s design career, and will be readdressed throughout this text.

Continuing the theme of environmental control presented in the previous set of premises, Rose, Kiley, and Eckbo stated:

> Nothing in the world “just happens.” A natural scene is the result of a very complicated and delicately balanced reaction of very numerous natural ecological forces. Man, himself a natural force, has power to control these environmental factors to a degree, and his reorganizations of them are directed by a conscious purpose toward a conscious objective. To endeavor to make the result of such a process ‘unconscious’ or ‘natural’ is to deny man’s natural place in the biological scheme. While the individual garden remains the ancestor of most landscape design, and while it will continue to be an important source of individual recreation, the fact remains that most urbanites do not nor cannot have access to one. And even when (or if) each dwelling unit has its private garden, the most important aspects of an urban recreational environment will lie outside its boundaries. The recreation of the city, like its work and its life, remains essentially a social problem. Landscape design is going through the same

> reconstruction in ideology and method that has changed every other form of planning since the industrial revolution.[63]

Here, we can observe a synergy between Rose's concepts of Modernity and some of the ideas presented in Hubbard and Kimball's *An Introduction to the Study of Landscape Design*. As discussed in the previous chapter, Hubbard and Kimball believed that unity in design is necessary because "man lives in and is part of an organized universe."[64] Within this organized universe, as Rose stated, nothing in the world can just happen on its own, because everything is wrapped up in a system together. Man is part of the organized "biological scheme." Unity, here, could be applied beyond forms within a landscape design, and into the rest of the cosmos.

Another related concept presented by Hubbard and Kimball is the landscape effect, or "the total reaction which the perception of a landscape may have upon a man."[65] Hubbard and Kimball emphasized the psychological power that landscape designers have within their roles as conscious creators of landscape effects. In the same way, Rose emphasized the power that man has through the conscious reorganization of the environment, and the opportunity that presents for landscape designers. In Rose's work, we also find mention of the same issues that Olmsted grappled with in his landscape designs within the advent of Modernity. Olmsted, by creating a naturalistic refuge within the city for urbanites, aspired to maintain the health and sanity of the rapidly growing

[63] Rose, Kiley, and Eckbo, "Landscape Design in the Urban Environment."
[64] Hubbard and Kimball. *An Introduction to the Study of Landscape Design*, 16.
[65] Hubbard and Kimball. *An Introduction to the Study of Landscape Design*, 76.

urban population. Rose, too, aspired to maintain the health and sanity of urbanites, but through accessible outdoor recreation rather than naturalistic forms specifically. This particular design ideal expanded later in Rose's life, and I argue that he eventually adopted elements of Olmsted's design style, such as the use of rocks and stones, which will be discussed later in this text.

In discussing the necessity of outdoor recreational space in modern living, Rose, Kiley, and Eckbo stated:

> ... Leisure and recreation, in their broadest sense, are fundamentally necessary factors of human life, especially in an industrial age. Recreation, work, and home life are fundamentally closely interdependent units, rather than entities to be segregated by wastefully attenuated transportation facilities, as they are today. Since most production in the city takes place under roof, indoors, it is obvious that urban recreation must emphasize the out-of-doors, plant life, air and light. In our poorly mechanized, over-centralized, and congested cities the crying need is for organized space: flexible, adaptable outdoor space in which to stretch, breath, expand, and grow. The urban dweller requires a complete, evenly distributed, and flexible *system* providing all types of recreation for persons of every age, interest, and sex.[66]

Rose, Kiley, and Eckbo stressed that modern planning related to outdoor space was inadequate. Transportation facilities did not efficiently connect recreation, work and

[66] Rose, Kiley, and Eckbo, "Landscape Design in the Urban Environment."

home. The majority of people's days were spent inside. City infrastructure was not adequate for growing populations. Their conceptions of outdoor recreational space went beyond isolated parks and considered necessary inclusion of city planning and spatial systems. Written prior to World War II, they had a very idealistic conception of urban space, but nevertheless it was a reflection of Modernist thought at this time, and a drastic departure from Beaux Arts spatial conventions. This was a time when a grand system seemed possible, necessary, and achievable. While Rose's motivations towards reordering the urban world through organized spatial systems changed after World War II, his ideals of adaptable outdoor space and organized spatial systems translated clearly into a residential context.

In this new mental atmosphere of Modernity, shaped by the industrial and economic revolutions, Rose stressed the reorganization of nature by man. It had happened in the name of agricultural and industrial production, leading to the age of urbanization. Rose believed it was time for landscape architects, alongside architects and city planners, to consciously reorganize nature in a way that was discernible and useful to modern populations while promoting physical and mental health. Adaptation of humans and the environment to rapidly changing conditions was inevitable in the organized universe. It was imperative, according to Rose, that landscape architects lead the adaptive process through functional spatial arrangements and an economy of space and materials.

Form from Function

Rose's main critique of the Beaux Arts tradition was that its forms were not useful, especially in a modern context. He stated that "... when we begin with any preconceived notion of form — symmetry, straight lines, or an axis — we eliminate the possibility of developing a form which will articulate and express the activity to occur."[67] Furthermore, he believed that landscape design without attention to form was indiscernible, expressing that:

> Anything that has not the quality of form is amorphous and meaningless. When man arranges nature or nature arrives at an arrangement perceptible to man, the thing acquires form and meaning.[68]

This was similar to Steele's prior critique of the term "informal." So, how did Rose believe meaningful forms could be articulated? It was previously mentioned in this chapter that Rose believed economic and efficient designs took into account *maintenance*, *plant control*, and *grading*. Rose stated that "when any of these requirements is scientifically provided for, it automatically suggests a form, probably unprecedented, which puts maintenance on an intelligent, clear-cut basis."[69] This type of form had little to do with axes, symmetry, or formality. However, responding to these three factors alone was not enough to articulate useful forms. According to Rose, outdoor spaces had to serve particular functions in order to be useful. Specifically, for outdoor spaces to be useful, he stated that, "design in the recreational environment of

[67] Rose, "Articulate Form in Landscape Design," 98.
[68] Rose, "Freedom in the Garden," 643.
[69] Rose, "Why Not Try Science," 777.

tomorrow must 1) integrate landscape and building, 2) be flexible, 3) be multi-utile, 4) exploit mechanization, 5) be social, not individual, in its approach."[70] These five elements persisted in his designs until the end of his career, regardless of the scale of a project, and served as the basis from which he created design forms.

Rose justified his design approach by arguing that humans have certain needs for their health and sanity. Integrated, flexible, multi-utile, mechanized, social spatial arrangements were necessary to maintain well-being in the modern world. In his justification, Rose stated that:

> Every individual has a certain optimum space relation — that is, he requires a certain volume of space around him for the greatest contentment and development of body and soul. This space has to be organized three-dimensionally to become comprehensible and important to man. This need falls into the intangible group of invisible elements in human life which have been largely disregarded in the past. Privacy out-of-doors means relaxation, emotional release from contact, reunion with nature and the soil.[71]

Spatial arrangements, according to Rose, needed to be considered volumetrically rather than in two dimensions. They also needed to include some opportunity for privacy outdoors. Finally, they needed to offer contentment through reunion with nature.

---

[70] Rose, Kiley, and Eckbo, "Landscape Design in the Urban Environment."
[71] Rose, Kiley, and Eckbo, "Landscape Design in the Urban Environment."

While Rose argued that organized outdoor space was a necessity, he also believed that the outdoor space had to be integrated with indoor space to provide the most efficient functionality. In describing integration, Rose stated, “the most urgent need is for the establishment of a biologic relationship between outdoor and indoor volumes.… This implies the integration of indoors and outdoors, of living space, working space, play space, of whole social units whose size is determined by the accessibility of its parts.”[72] This type of integration would require a close partnership between architect and landscape architect, and at the time those roles were quite separate. If achieved, individuals could live seamlessly between indoor and outdoor spaces, enjoying the advantages of reunion with nature without having to go through extensive efforts of travel. In creating integrated spatial arrangements, Rose was inspired by constructivism, a movement in Modernist sculpture that drew from Cubist forms that favored material assemblage over decoration:

> The constructivists probably have the most to offer landscape design because their work deals with space relations in volume. The sense of transparency, and of visibility broken by a succession of planes, as found in their constructions, if translated into terms of outdoor material, would be an approach sufficient in itself to free us from the limitation imposed by the axial system.[73]

Outdoor spaces could be arranged in such a way that individual spaces could still be connected through open, transparent thresholds to make economic use of volume.

[72] Rose, Kiley, and Eckbo, “Landscape Design in the Urban Environment.”
[73] Rose, “Freedom in the Garden,” 642.

Additionally, indoor and outdoor spaces could be arranged in such a way that the line of sight between them is uninterrupted, continuing the merge of their volumes. In Rose's designs, this was achieved through careful spatial arrangement as well as the use of glass (Fig 6).

FIGURE 6 Saadia Rais, *View of Entry Courtyard from Hallway at the Averett House*, 2018, photograph.

Figure 6 shows a view from a small interior hallway out to an entry courtyard at the Averett House, designed by James Rose in 1959. The interior hallway is small, but it is separated from a large living room by a few interior steps which are located behind the view of the camera in Figure 6. The volumes of the hallway and living room intersect

because there is no wall separating them, but they are also subdivided because of the vertical steps separating them, working in three dimensions. Thus, the line of sight is maintained between the hallway and living room. This elongated line of sight continues into the exterior courtyard due to the glass wall. The small hallway feels larger and integrated with the outdoors due to this glass wall, allowing natural light to enter not only the hallway but also the living room. Though located inside, the hallway becomes part of the courtyard through the glass. Beyond the courtyard, beyond the brown metal division in Figure 6, is the garage. Both the garage space and the hallway could have been larger in volume had this courtyard not existed. But, because of the spatial arrangement of the courtyard in relation to the hallway and garage, a usable private outdoor space exists, as well as a view from indoors to outdoors from both the hallway and the living room. Another hallway intersects with this hallway at a perpendicular angle, alongside the left portion of the courtyard as viewed in Figure 6. This left hallway also receives natural light and an elongated line of sight through its adjacency to the courtyard.

This type of integration would not have been possible if Rose had not been able to work with the architect of the residence to create an integrated design. Rose usually strongly influenced the architectural elements of a residential design, so that they had a flexible relationship with landscape elements. As he described,

> When building and landscape achieve this flexibility, we discover that the only difference between indoor and outdoor design is in the materials and the technical problems involved. Indoors and outdoors become one —

> interchangeable and indistinguishable except in the degree of protection from the elements.[74]

Rather than thinking of indoor space and outdoor space separately, Rose believed that planning them both through spatial arrangement in an integrated way allowed for maximum utility by the users of the site. The residents of the house can spend time in the entry courtyard in Figure 6 as a private outdoor space, one of many that exist on this site. But they can also reap the benefits of natural light and the illusion of extended volume while inside the residence. Thoughtful spatial arrangement and use of materials allowed for an efficiency and economy of space, a fusion of shelter and landscape, and the existence of outdoor private spaces.

Materiality

In his writings and designs, Rose addressed the use of materials in two ways. First, he suggested a broad and creative use of materials, especially in the context of Modernity. Second, he recommended that landscape designers emphasize the inherent qualities of materials specific to landscape architecture: plants, rock, earth, water, and light. He was inspired by the celebration of materiality over ornament in Modernist architecture.

For Rose, new materials and methods were an essential part of the scientific and technical advances of Modernity, as well as the means by which adaptable and

[74] Rose, Kiley, and Eckbo, “Landscape Design in the Urban Environment."

integrated spaces could exist. In regards to the role of technological advancement in urban development, Rose, Kiley, and Eckbo stated:

> This implies a frank recognition, on the part of landscape designers particularly, of the decisive importance of "the machine"; it must be met and mastered, not fled from. Indeed, the only way in which landscape design can be made flexible, multi-utile, and integral with building is by the widest use of modern materials, equipments, and methods.[75]

Rose believed that "the machine," referring to technological advances as well as systematic modern methods, should be used to expand design possibilities within the landscape. Rose used floor-to-ceiling glass, a modern material prized by Modernist architects, to integrate indoor and outdoor spaces.

The railroad tie, another product of Modernity, was a design material that Rose used liberally, and for good reason. Railroad ties were free of cost, leftover from the onset of railway systems in the U.S. They were also created in standardized sizes, and thus acted as modular building blocks that could adapt to many site conditions and uses. As noted in Rose's biography,

> They supported his development of a distinctive geometry that was inherent in ties as a building material and that was reminiscent of a modern spatial sensibility, as expressed in the abstract cubist paintings he had both cited (and created) before and during World War II. Modular, segmented, and lineal, but not necessarily orthogonal, when assembled

[75] Rose, Kiley, and Eckbo, "Landscape Design in the Urban Environment."

> into steps and retaining walls railroad ties enabled development of a dynamic, flexible, obtuse-angled, three-dimensional spatial experience that, in combination with the use of existing site features, would become characteristic of Rose's work throughout his career.[76]

Railroad ties were not only an economic material for landscape design, but provided a freedom in form and function that echoed Modernist geometric forms. Easily stacked, they served as building blocks in volumetric space.

FIGURE 7 Saadia Rais, *Railroad Ties Used As Steps and Retaining Wall at the Averett House*, 2018, photograph.

[76] Cardasis, *James Rose: A Voice Offstage*, 60.

Rose used railroad ties to perform various functions in the Averett House landscape design (Fig. 7). In the top right of the image, the ties are used as stairs leading down from the driveway, an area with a higher grade. They are also used to create a retaining wall, integrated with the steps. The retaining wall holds together planting beds, surrounding a concrete patio area. This patio opens into an even larger patio space containing a swimming pool to the right (not pictured.) The spaces are separated by railroad ties that are stacked in twos, creating two steps. The steps are at a comfortable height for sitting, and could be used as seats during a gathering. Enclosure and privacy have been reinforced through a fence placed at the top of the planting beds. In this instance, the railroad ties have been used three-dimensionally in the landscape design, directing circulation and adapting usable landscape spaces out of the existing grade. The volumes of the spaces intersect, so the line of sight is not broken and the overall space feels large, but still segmented. The spaces are flexible and can be used for various activities.

While modern materials like glass and railroad ties were fundamental components of Rose's designs, he also believed in the sanctity of materials that had always been a part of the landscape. As mentioned in a previous passage, he stated that because so much of modern life was spent indoors, there was a great need for organized outdoor spaces with plant life, air, and light.[77] Furthermore, he believed that "plants, rock, earth, and water are the major materials of landscape; to ignore any one

[77] Rose, Kiley, and Eckbo, "Landscape Design in the Urban Environment."

of them limits the possibilities."[78] These materials are specific to landscape design as a medium, and thus Rose argued that they are elemental to creating a design, not simply materials to be applied as an afterthought to impose symmetry or formality.

Rose was especially vocal about the role of plants in landscape design. He often integrated existing plants into his site designs, arguing that it would be a waste to remove materials that were useful and beautiful. While vegetation had loose shapes and the ability to change over time, which may seem at odds with the clean static forms in Modernist architectural aesthetics, Rose believed it was these qualities that gave each plant its unique and useful character. He said, "considered as materials, all plants have definite potentialities and each plant has an inherent quality which will inevitably express itself."[79] Rather than architects, Rose could be compared more to Modernists like choreographer Isadora Duncan in this instance, who was heavily influenced by Charles Darwin and believed in the natural and inherent traits of the physical human body. Duncan choreographed movements that worked *with* the body rather than against it, opposing the restrictive tradition of ballet. Similarly, Rose recognized that landscape designers choreograph space with living materials, and he used the inherent qualities of plants to highlight their values as specimens instead of forcing them into restrictive forms. Rose argued that a design should adapt to the specific context of each site, as he stated, "now we can throw away the rubber stamp of Beaux Arts tradition and, although a continuity of style will rightly develop, the solution of each problem will acquire individuality and distinction because it is based on the organic integration of

[78] Rose, "Freedom in the Garden," 642.
[79] James C. Rose, "Plants Dictate Garden Forms" *Pencil Points*, November 1938, 695.

almost inexhaustible material, existing conditions, and the factors of use which could never repeat themselves exactly in all cases."[80] Plants, with their endlessly varying qualities, can be chosen in a way that adapts to different sites and different uses, articulating forms in the design process rather than being tacked on once a landscape design has been conceived.

Rose's emphasis on materiality was essential to his Modernist conventions. Both his openness to modern materials and his appreciation for natural landscape materials shaped his design forms and spatial arrangements. He believed that landscape design could not be Modern without emphasis on materials, stating that "the contemporary landscape would require the honest use of materials and the expression of their inherent qualities."[81] It was from materials and functions that design forms could emerge, adapting to a site's existing conditions.

As mentioned in the last chapter, if Modernist landscape design *should not* be defined by style alone, I posit that it *should* be defined instead by the function of the design, the ideologies from which the design is rooted, and the way the design expresses the conditions of Modernity. James Rose believed that the Beaux Arts design vocabulary he was taught in the graduate landscape architecture program at Harvard was not adequate in meeting the needs of modern society. He argued that the new mental atmosphere and living conditions of modern times necessitated integrated, flexible, multi-utile, mechanized, social spatial arrangements to maintain well-being. He

[80] Rose, "Plants Dictate Garden Forms," 697.
[81] Rose, "Freedom in the Garden," 642-643.

believed that space could be thoughtfully arranged in more economic, efficient and enjoyable ways through the adaptation of materials and design forms to a site's existing conditions. Finally, he believed that natural materials (such as plants, rocks, earth, and water) had their own inherent and useful qualities. Rose aspired to create landscape designs that connected the inner self to nature. He also allowed the design process to evolve over time. As we move on to the next chapter, I will focus on three key design elements that crystallize Rose's design values: 1) the fusion of shelter and landscape, 2) private outdoor spaces, and 3) creative use of everyday materials. These design elements materialize Rose's Modernist conceptions, and are consistent throughout his evolving design career.

CHAPTER 3: The Ridgewood Residence as a Case Study in Modernist Landscape Architecture

"No absolute exists in design any more than it does in nature." — James Rose

Prior to World War II, James Rose had gained prominence as a Modernist landscape architecture theorist through his writings. Unsatisfied with the teachings of the profession, he made proclamations about how landscape architecture could best adapt to the conditions of Modernity. He is still celebrated today for his contributions to the canon of landscape architectural theory. World War II was a turning point in Rose's life, and most of his works were designed and built after his return from the war. He was disenchanted by the injustice, hypocrisy of authority, and demand for conformity he observed during wartime. The demand for conformity would continue to alienate him in the context of post-WWII suburbia, where designs were overwhelmingly both ecologically destructive and banal. Rose turned away from large-scale urban projects and focused instead on Modernist residential projects, where he could fully exercise his creative freedom and turn away any client who did not understand or appreciate his motives. He developed an improvisational design technique, allowing a design to unfold over time rather than adhering to a plan. His best-known project is his own residence in Ridgewood, New Jersey.

When speaking of the design of Rose's Ridgewood residence, we face a dilemma. It changed over Rose's lifetime, as many of our own residences do. He was heavily influenced by his frequent visits to Japan, beginning in the 1960s and continuing until his death in 1991. His inspirations from his visits were integrated into his designs as well as his personal philosophy — he converted to Zen Buddhism, and the design of his home reflected the relationship he perceived between spirituality and the landscape. He also adapted his residence to functional changes in his life, such as the death of his mother who lived with him, and a leaking roof. Some would argue that because of the changes made to Rose's Ridgewood residence, the design could no longer be considered "Modernist." For example, the National Register of Historic Places has criteria related to characteristics specific to the time period of a design. Because the Ridgewood Residence design changed over time, there is no distinct time period with which it is associated. Furthermore, the National Register requires property integrity, including integrity of design and materials. If the design and materials of the Ridgewood residence changed over time, do they still have integrity in the context of Modernism?

"Modernist" has no singular definition in landscape architecture. In describing the term, landscape theorist Marc Treib declared that "instead of a coherent doctrine, one finds rambling and imprecise printed discourse, a motley group of individuals, many of whom were not landscape architects by training, and a trail of projects that could be classified as modern only to varying degrees."[82] But Modernism has no singular definition in any field or medium, and Rose was quite clear about what he meant by

[82] Treib, "Axioms for a Modern Landscape Architecture," 37.

“Modern” in his writings. Neither his writings, nor his designs after his visits to Japan, contradicted the proclamations he had made before World War II. Instead, they were enriched by a newfound spirituality — one that harmonized with Rose’s Modernist ideals — and a more seasoned, experienced design perspective. Furthermore, Rose had been inspired by Darwin’s theory of evolution, and believed that a design should adapt and change over time. Adaptation was part of Rose’s expression of Modernism.

Based on Rose’s writings and designs created before his visits to Japan, I have established three primary Modernist design motifs that persisted in Rose’s designs throughout his lifetime, using his former residence in Ridgewood as a case study. The first design motif is **the fusion of shelter and landscape**. Rose argued for the integration of indoor and outdoor spaces, believing that more economic and fulfilling spaces could be created through thoughtful spatial arrangement. The second design motif is the creation of **private outdoor spaces**. In a densely populated landscape, Rose believed it was important to be able to use the entirety of one’s property to reconnect with natural elements and maintain well-being. Finally, the third design motif is **the creative use of everyday materials**. Both the industrialized world and the natural world have a wealth of materials, and Rose believed that landscape designs should adapt to what already exists at hand.

The Residential Model

During World War II, Rose had enlisted in the Navy and was stationed in both the Mariana Islands as well as Okinawa. This experience disillusioned him. While he had

been inspired by the *progress* of Modernity prior to his enlistment, he observed the *complementary notion of decline* as it came to full fruition throughout the war. As described in Rose's biography,

> During his time in the service, with its red-tape inefficiencies and injustices and its intimate exposure of human greed and jealousy under stress, Rose became increasingly disillusioned, alienated, and embittered. As he moved from basic training to the Pacific front, his efforts to express his creativity became bogged down in the military's demand for conformity. He lost his privacy, and he daily confronted what he saw as the mounting hypocrisies of the war. In his letters home he refers to himself and his fellow sailors as 'inmates,' but he explains that he has found escape through his imagination, withdrawing to what he calls a 'little island in the mind'.[83]

Upon observing the inefficiencies, hypocrisy, injustice, and conformity that came with supposed systems of military order, he found refuge in his "little island in the mind", which he described as "the nearest thing I've ever known to peace and fulfillment."[84] This little island could be seen as analogous to the outdoor refuges in the midst of modern life that Rose had written about with Kiley and Eckbo. While they may have argued for a whole network of outdoor spaces, Rose realized during the war that such a network would take authoritative planning — planning that he no longer believed was achievable by problematic systems of power and governance.

---

[83] Cardasis, *James Rose: A Voice Offstage*, 45.
[84] James Rose, Letter to his mother Minnie Rose, December 18, 1944, JRCA.

Instead, Rose imagined what he could achieve when given the freedom to design with his full creative intention. He was reminded that peace was not achieved through the outdoors alone, but through an inner connection to the spirit and psyche of the individual — the source of his own little island. This type of design work could only be done in a residential context, where the primary limit to pure creative expression was the client — and he could accept and deny clients based on their motivations and character. For him, creating an authentic refuge for the few worthy individuals was more fulfilling than creating a network of insufficient outdoor spaces inhibited by the limits of authority. This was the reality of Modernity.

Eager to return to the US and create these refuges, Rose took himself on as a client during his enlistment, creating a model for his future residence from scavenged materials (Fig. 8).

FIGURE 8 *Rose with scrap model*, 1943, photograph, James Rose Center for Architectural Research and Design, Ridgewood, Accessed April 2020, www.jamesrosecenter.org

Rose adapted to his wartime conditions and created a spatial arrangement from whatever useful materials he could find on hand. He described the process in a letter to his mother:

> You will be amazed at the things in my model. It's built on a piece of stolen plywood cut to its present shape with the battalion saws and nailed together with "borrowed" nails. I bribed one of the mess cooks for some galley flour which, with the brown paper wrapping off your first package, made some excellent paper mache for modeling the river bank. The armature for the paper mache is wire screening "borrowed" while the mess hall was under construction. The tacks that fasten it to the plywood were "procured" from the tent area while the tents were being screened… I also have redwood strips made from surveying stakes, which I use for the roof. The window glass will be cut from thin celluloid lenses from Japanese gas masks which I found today in a wild mosquito infested bivouac near where we work. The hedges are made from clothes stops. I can't describe the intricacies of making all these things, but to give you an idea, I found some insulated wire which is made up of seven strands. Three of these are soft lead and four are stiff and springy like piano wire, but smaller. I take the lead wire and wind it around the clothes stops at approximately half-inch intervals and then cut just below the wire. This

holds the cord together at the bottom and allows it to fray at the top.

When painted and cemented to the model it looks a lot like shrubbery.[85]

In the carefully placed quotation marks that Rose used in his letter, one can observe the crafty pleasure that he took in bending rules to get what he needed. Though faced with challenges, the task of making this model while he was enlisted in the Navy invigorated him. Rose had pursued model-making in his Harvard days, upholding the need for three-dimensional spatial arrangements rather than drawings in plan view or in section. He lamented the qualities that are lost when "interpreting a sculptural conception of specific materials from a flat drawing or paper,"[86] arguing that the paper design may take precedence over the volumetric design conception. This is part of what led to Rose's expulsion from Harvard's GSD. Rose had always been a champion of truth rather than expected procedure.

The model represented a modular residential design that could be adapted to different plots of land. It included sheltered living spaces for himself, his mother, and his sister. It also included a network of various outdoor spaces for different functions, such as social gatherings, gardening or relaxation. He would continue the innovative and frugal nature with which he attained materials for the model in his construction and amendments of the Ridgewood residence and his other projects.

Upon returning from the war, Rose set up an office in Manhattan, employing model-makers and creating residential landscape designs. He also lectured at Columbia University and Cooper Union. Rose's critique and confrontation with suburbia began

[85] James Rose, Letter to his mother Minnie Rose, December 9, 1944, JRCA.
[86] James C. Rose, "Landscape Models," *Pencil Points*, July 1939, 438.

during this time. Rose had previously written about rapid urbanization, and now his design career paved a path that dealt with yet another phenomenon of urbanization, the **post-war explosion of suburban development**. His first book, *Creative Gardens* (1958), is described in his biography as "a kind of landscape drama satirizing authority and the typical contemporary American conformist attitude represented by 1950s suburbia."[87] The disdain that he had for arbitrary convention came to full fruition in the context of suburban life.

In 1952, James Rose purchased his own plot of suburban land in Ridgewood, New Jersey. The narrow trapezoidal parcel, an overgrown scrap of land that was formerly a trolley stop, was a mere 10,000 square feet in size. Setbacks left about half the size of a tennis court for building a conventional home, making the plot rather undesirable to most customers. This plot of land was perfect for a designer as creative and ambitious as Rose, who met the challenge with a flexible mind. It was on this plot that he built the residence he first conceptualized and modeled during World War II.

The Ridgewood Residence Before 1960

James Rose, along with his mother and sister, moved into the Ridgewood residence in 1953. There were three apartments, perhaps better described as "shelters." Within the spatial arrangement of the three shelters were three courtyards.

[87] Cardasis, *James Rose: A Voice Offstage*, 52.

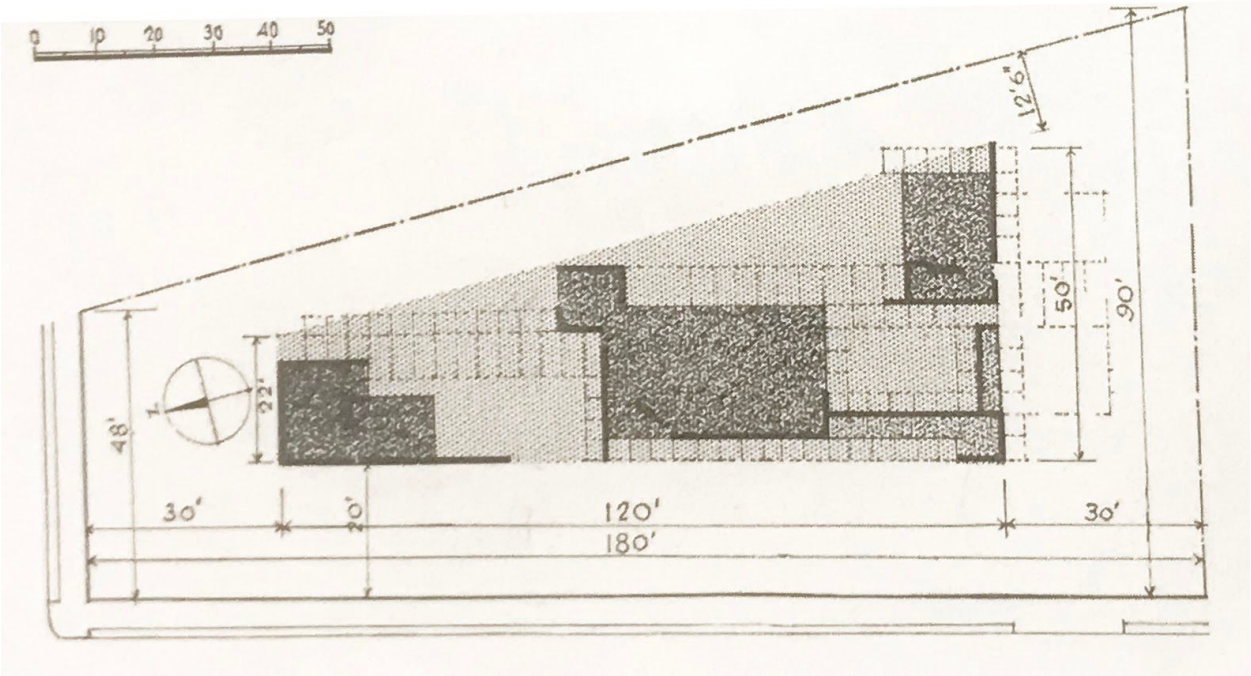

FIGURE 9 James Rose, *Diagram of Site Development*, 1958, in James C. Rose *Creative Gardens* (New York: Reinhold Publishing Corporations, 1958).

The courtyards both connected and separated the shelters (Fig. 9). The shelters had floor-to-ceiling glass walls looking into each courtyard, elongating the line of sight when indoors, and making the shelter feel larger and more integrated with the landscape (Fig. 10). Other shelter walls were constructed with concrete block units, and they extended into the landscape as garden walls, providing privacy from the road and neighboring homes (Fig. 11). Pine hedges and bosques of white birches were used to create additional privacy in the landscape areas, extending the grid around which Rose organized the residential design. Tables were constructed from the same concrete pavers used in the courtyard and steel frames.

FIGURE 10 James Rose, *View from Central Shelter to Eastern Courtyard*, 1954, photograph, in Dean Cardasis *James Rose: A Voice Offstage* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2017), 115.

FIGURE 11 James Rose, *Concrete Block Edges Northern Shelter & Landscape*, 1954, photograph, in Dean Cardasis *James Rose: A Voice Offstage* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2017), 112.

The three shelters had been built around existing trees on the site at its time of purchase. By separating the sheltered spaces into three apartments, Rose was able to adapt to the site's limited size and also create privacy, both indoors and outdoors. The shelters and materials were arranged in such a way that small spaces felt larger, and the lines between indoor and outdoor spaces were blurred. Every part of the property could be used for living. A full kitchen and large indoor gathering space was only

present in the central shelter, his mother's, but all other amenities could be found in each individual shelter.

This spatial arrangement was a stark contrast from the typical suburban home and landscape. Most suburban homes are placed at the center of a lot, surrounded by turf, a few ornamental trees, and foundation plantings. The landscape is tacked on around the house, requiring regular maintenance but providing little useful spatial experience. While residents may own the entire site property, much of it goes to waste, exposed and uninhabited. A lawn is not an outdoor refuge. It provides limited recreation and relaxation, despite the attention it requires for upkeep. Meanwhile, Rose believed in an economy of space, making every bit useful — not just for recreation, but for living. He stated that "a garden is an experience", describing the essence of a garden as "the sense of being within something while still out of doors."[88] In this sense, a garden is not specifically a planted area, but an inhabitable outdoor space, different from indoor space only in its materials and conditions.

Interestingly enough, in December 1954, prior to Rose's frequent visits to Japan, the Ridgewood residence was featured in the magazine *Progressive Architecture*, juxtaposed with a traditional Japanese house and garden that had been reassembled in the courtyard of the Museum of Modern Art. In Rose's biography, it is stated that "in comparing the two projects, the article points out how modern Western architectural ideas — such as appreciation for the aesthetic quality of the structural system, house plan flexibility and modularity, and a close indoor-outdoor relationship — were

[88] Rose, James C. *Creative Gardens*. New York: Reinhold Publishing Corporation, 1958.

anticipated in traditional Japanese design."[89] This coincidence of comparison may help us understand why Rose's Modernist design style was sometimes mistakenly described as "Japanese". It is worth noting that many Modernists had been inspired by Japanese traditions, though few had the opportunity to visit Japan themselves. The synergy between Rose's spatial values and traditional Japanese spatial values is strong, and he used Zen Buddhist teachings to reinforce his own design concepts after 1960. In particular, Zen concepts of space and time were particularly aligned with his improvisational design style and conviction that a design should adapt and change over time. Additionally, the Zen concept of oneness with the universe aligned with his aspiration to connect the inner self to nature and the cosmos through his designs. However, as we will discuss in the next section, he was vehemently opposed to the idea that he created Japanese gardens, as he bore little imitation of prescribed Japanese styles, and was critical of the pictorial nature of traditional Japanese gardens. In fact, even in the scope of the 1954 magazine article, the garden was meant to be *viewed from the house* in the Japanese design, whereas Rose's Ridgewood residence possessed outdoor spaces that were meant to be *used*.

Rose had always conceived of a design that could change over time, much like an organism would. In describing the residence, he stated:

> I set up the basic armature of walls, and roofs, and open spaces to establish their relationships, but left it free in detail to allow for improvisation. In that way it would never be 'finished,' but constantly

[89] Cardasis, *James Rose: A Voice Offstage*, 108.

> evolving from one stage to the next — a metamorphosis such as we find, commonly, in nature.[90]

To imagine that a residence would not change from its original design is unreasonable. People's lives change over time. Materials degrade, needs change, conditions change, and so a residence must change. This poses a problem for many when examining historic homes and landscapes. Modernist designs in the U.S. are only recently starting to reach an age where they can be approved to join the National Register for Historic Places. As part of the national register, one criterion is the significance of a site in a particular movement, and another is the site's material and design integrity. What is considered "Modernist" in landscape architecture is disputed, and one may argue that because the Ridgewood design changed over time, it no longer has integrity as a Modernist design. But the notion of change was built into the design of the Ridgewood residence from the time of its conception, and was inspired by Rose's Modernist perspectives of space. Adaptation is a key concept in Rose's Modernist design philosophies.

The Ridgewood Residence After Rose's Japan Visits

In 1960, James Rose attended the World Design Conference in Japan. He had been invited there, alongside the eighty-four other non-Japanese designer attendees. Japanese culture was mysterious to Westerners, as the country previously had a strict isolationist policy, called *sakoku*, prohibiting the entrance of foreigners from 1639 to 1853. Despite the conference's emphasis on Japanese Modernist design, Rose became

[90] Rose, James C. *Creative Gardens*. New York: Reinhold Publishing Corporation, 1958.

enamored with Japanese tradition. He converted to Zen Buddhism and visited Japan almost annually until his death in 1991.

Added in the early 1970s, there are some common Japanese details that can be observed at the Ridgewood residence. Rose incorporated sliding shoji screens into the residence, using them as doors between interior spaces, as well as for privacy along the floor-to-ceiling glass walls (Fig. 12). Other Japanese-style additions were window-side platforms, sitting cushions (*zafu* and *zabuton*) and low tables (Fig. 12).

FIGURE 12 Saadia Rais, *Shoji Screens and Other Japanese Details*, 2018, photograph.

FIGURE 13 Saadia Rais, *Buddha Sculpture and Limbed Cherry*, 2018, photograph.

He also added a sculpture of Buddha in one of the courtyards, where a cherry tree that had existed on the site since its purchase in 1952 had been limbed in such a way that it resembled an Ikebana floral arrangement (Fig. 13).

While these details may be recognizably Japanese, Rose recoiled at any assumptions that his designs were Japanese, stating that “it used to bother me, bother me painfully — I mean the way pimples bother an adolescent — when people would call my gardens ‘Japanese’.”[91] Aside from the fact that Rose himself was not Japanese, and none of his projects were built in Japan, Rose argued that there were philosophical and spatial distinctions between his designs and traditional Japanese designs. First, Rose designed outdoor spaces meant to be used and experienced from within, rather than regarded pictorially. He described the Japanese garden as something that “has modulation and depth, but it is essentially a pictorial experience like a painting — without in-ness, the state of being *in* something.”[92] In describing his experience with a Japanese stroll garden, he stated:

> One garden has something like a hundred and eight “pictures,” each with its “viewing” stone. I don’t get much “enlightenment” out of this. I get a little tired, and annoyed at being marched up the hill to look at a “picture" and then marched down again. The spaces between are nothing more than boy scouts paths for nature study. They’re sort of left over parts between the “pictures.”... This surprises me because the Japanese are often so good at “making the connection,” but it’s part of the enigma and the

[91] Rose, *Gardens Make Me Laugh*, 67.
[92] Rose, *Gardens Make Me Laugh*, 85.

> Japanese blind spot, from the Western point of view, in missing the *gestaldt*.[93]

The “pictures” in the Japanese garden were representational and ornamental, which Rose had contested since his Harvard days, critiquing both the Beaux Arts tradition for its use of ornament and the European villas for their celebrated depictions of Greek mythology, which was well-recognizable amongst the aristocracy of the time. Second, noted in the previous quote, Rose was irritated by the controlled walking paths throughout Japanese gardens. The circulation they provided was limited to the pictorial views along the way. Rose discussed:

> They arrange those damned stones so that you walk in a certain way — their way — or else you’re a slob or you fall in the water. You’re directed. You don’t just stroll around.[94]

This type of circulation was restricted, and neither multi-use nor relaxing. It choreographed an experience that, ultimately, was comparable to the axially arranged Beaux Arts pathways used to regard a scene. Meanwhile, Rose’s designs had flexibility in their circulation and led to a variety of outdoor spaces, spanning from large gathering courtyards to intimate conversation benches enclosed by shrubs.

The final distinction between Rose’s designs and Japanese tradition is more ideological. While Rose had become critical of conformist logic used by authorities and society, he also still upheld the application of logic to create useful and economic spatial arrangements. In his opinion, logic was a Western trait, as he noted:

---

[93] Rose, *Gardens Make Me Laugh*, 86-87.
[94] Rose, *Gardens Make Me Laugh*, 85.

> … After a while, I get a little sick of having the west made to appear idiotic because it's 'reasonable.' Even that has some advantages — advantages which the Japanese don't readily grasp because they are alogical.[95]

Applying logic to a space did not have to be inflexible or overly calculated in Rose's opinion, so long as it was mindful. Furthermore, he did not mean to insult the Japanese people by calling them alogical. He was implying that Western society often has a preoccupation with semantics, getting lost in the world of the ego. In describing the Japanese people, he stated, "their first language is NATURE, and yours is logic and words."[96] Rose used logic and words to circumvent zoning ordinances (for example, by describing a fence that was taller than the ordained 4-foot maximum limit as a "pole arrangement"), but the lessons he learned from Japan were more spiritual and less prescriptive.

In describing "it," or a spiritual oneness devoid of the veil of separation caused by the ego, Rose said,

> YOU have to go there — not to Japan — if you want to do a garden. That's where nothing is.… No logical deductions. Just you and nothing so combined they might be called N-Y-O-U-T-H-I-N-G — which is different from either YOU or NOTHING just as water is different from hydrogen and oxygen.[97]

[95] Rose, *Gardens Make Me Laugh*, 80.
[96] Rose, *Gardens Make Me Laugh*, 76.
[97] Rose, *Gardens Make Me Laugh*, 77.

For him, it was not Japan that was the refuge to the problems of Modernity, but an inner connection between the spirit and the universe, where the individual identities and logics taken on in the material world fall away. Prior to World War II, Rose had written that outdoor spaces should be used as an asylum from the toils of modern life, providing recreation and relaxation through reconnection with nature. After Rose's visits to Japan, he believed the same, but with the additional Zen possibility that these outdoor spaces could be used as *sanctuaries* to embody oneness with the universe.

Whether or not an outdoor living space could be used as a sanctuary depended on the client. Rose was notoriously picky when accepting clients, annoyed with the desires of most Americans to have a barbecue or a certain style of paving before considering their connection to nature. In describing American suburban desires, Rose stated,

> In heaven… I presume that one man would like to have the largest flowers, another man the most possessions, and still another the greatest peace of mind.… The American garden is not a garden for the man who has everything. It's the illusion of the man who is without it.[98]

The typical suburban home was a representation of a family's success at attaining the American dream. A well-manicured lawn provided status, and that status was gained through conformity to mediocre norms. Rose believed that how an individual viewed a garden said a lot about their inner self. In describing the role of a garden as a mirror of character, he said,

[98] Rose, *Gardens Make Me Laugh*, 62.

> Take as nearly a perfect mirror as you can get and let people look into it. Not at their faces, of course. Not even at their gardens. But at themselves, the way they are — not the way they look. And how they got that way, that's the most important.[99]

The way that a person connects to outdoor space is a reflection of their inner self. This was the spiritual leap that Rose made during his time as a designer and as Buddhist — *prioritizing the reunion of the inner self and the universe*. An outdoor sanctuary would include the possibility of reunion with the universe through connection with natural elements, conveying the presentness of each moment. But to feel this reunion, the phenomenological perspective of the individual within the outdoor sanctuary must not be clouded with the normative complexes of suburbanites. In describing the fears that some clients have about pools of water on a site, Rose stated:

> I don't think water cares. Water is like that. It never "courts" you.… If you see it one way — your way — it's a muddy hole where children drown and mosquitoes breed. If you see it another way, it's the universe. And whichever way you see it is the way you are.[100]

Thus, Rose only accepted clients who seemed to have the potential to see the universe through the natural elements around them. For decades at the Ridgewood residence, with himself as his main client, he had full freedom to explore design improvisations in the name of continued reunion with the universe, restricted only by his meager budget.

---

[99] Rose, *Gardens Make Me Laugh*, 8.
[100] Rose, *Gardens Make Me Laugh*, 114-116.

Before her death, James Rose's mother Minnie Rose took out a twenty-four thousand dollar loan for alterations to the Ridgewood residence. Rose prepared his studio apartment for rental due to his frequent travels, expanding it an additional twelve feet to the south, with a masonry wall replacing one of the glass walls in the adjacent courtyard for extra privacy. Full kitchens were added to the shelters that had been lacking them. His mother's shelter and his sister's shelter were merged with a hallway, giving his sister easy access to attend to their mother's deteriorating health. The courtyard between those two shelters became accessible only from indoors, creating the private "Buddha Garden", with a staircase that led to a roof garden constructed in the early 1970s (Fig. 14).

The roof garden contained a zendo (Fig. 15), or meditation space, where Rose often went to contemplate his designs before returning to a site. Beyond the zendo was an "outdoor apartment" with a fireplace (Fig. 16), leading to a gathering area sheltered by a large pitched roof constructed from fiberglass and wood (Fig. 17). Portions of the roof were perforated, creating an open envelope. A bridge led to the roof of the adjacent studio apartment, which was surrounded with planters (Fig 18). Rose nearly doubled the usable footprint of the property with the roof spaces, furthering his design value of economic volumetric spatial arrangement and creating several more private outdoor spaces. What is all the more remarkable is that the concept for the roof garden was formed in response to a leak in the flat roof of the central shelter. Adapting to this leak, Rose added a pitched roof *on top of* the existing roof, with enough space between the two for circulation and occupancy.

FIGURE 14 *Buddha Garden*, early 1970s, photograph, in Dean Cardasis *James Rose: A Voice Offstage* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2017), 158.

FIGURE 15 *Zendo*, early 1980s, photograph, in Dean Cardasis *James Rose: A Voice Offstage* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2017), 166.

FIGURE 16 Saadia Rais, *Outdoor Roof Apartment*, 2018, photograph.

FIGURE 17 Saadia Rais, *Gathering Area with Fiberglass and Wood Pitched Roof*, 2018, photograph.

FIGURE 18 Saadia Rais, *Bridge to Studio Rooftop Garden*, 2018, photograph.

Had Rose drafted a plan to strictly adhere to as a static design concept, none of these design changes could have been conceived. The residence may have been more easily documented, classified, and replicated. But this evolving design responded to the changing needs and desires of its occupants. As Rose stated,

> Most clients are thoroughly indoctrinated as to the sanctity of a plan… It gets to the point where the client mistakes a plan for a garden instead of a piece of paper which it is…[101]

The spatial arrangements that Rose created at the Ridgewood residence were meant to be experienced, and furthermore, it was his experience living there over time that directed the forms of the design. Sketches and plans on paper can only be representational. However, those documents often symbolize the logic behind a design, and thus are prized by most clients and authorities. Rose's lack of plan, referring to both a plan on paper as well as a set of decisions strictly arranged in advance, embodies his Modernist rebellion against Harvard's landscape architecture program. In describing the program's teaching methods, he stated:

> They sent students all over Europe to copy every garden that's ever been done. They brought back measured drawings. They were absolutely accurate — to the millionth of an inch — more accurate, I'm sure, than the drawings of the guys who did the original gardens. Maybe *they* didn't even have drawings, but if they ever wanted some for any reason later on, all they had to do was go to Harvard to find out what they'd done.… [Harvard]

[101] Rose, *Gardens Make Me Laugh*, 53.

> trained the students, who were unfortunate enough not to get to Europe, to measure the drawings of the students who did so that… they could "adapt" the copies of the copies of the gardens that the guy who did them originally may not even have had a drawing of.[102]

The type of "adaptation" that Harvard taught was fundamentally different than the type of adaptation that Rose performed in his designs. Harvard taught an eclecticism that was available through combinations and careful replications of famous designs. Documentation superseded the lived experience of a space. Meanwhile, Rose's adaptive design forms were articulated through his time spent *within* a space. He firmly believed that one could not replace physical presence with documented representation. He expressed his faith in physical landscape experience through a character named Johnny Landscape, an aspiring young American landscape designer confused by Harvard's approach:

> … To understand Johnny Landscape's confusion, you have to see it from *his* point of view. He's not a professor and he doesn't know the finer distinctions between right and wrong and he's probably never even seen the book or the drawings and doesn't even know what a garden is. He only knows what happens to him, and when you get him out in the country, he's liable to see that there are other kinds of landscapes that aren't in the book at all.[103]

[102] Rose, *Gardens Make Me Laugh*, 35.
[103] Rose, *Gardens Make Me Laugh*, 37.

Again and again, we can observe Rose's disdain for conformity and authority. Adherence to tradition, in his opinion, obscured a designer from thinking for himself and experiencing spaces with his own body in the present.

Mindfulness, a Zen Buddhist concept, emphasizes one's consciousness in the present moment. Rose's notion of the *garden as an experience* was further developed by Buddhist teachings on presentness. Over time, Rose realized that his younger years were filled with many proclamations and attempted definitions, grounded in the land of words. He had enthusiastically written about forms, uses, and functions. Throughout his years as a Buddhist and as a design practitioner, he realized that these words could not fully capture the act of respecting the experience of spaces in the present moment, as he describes in this passage:

> ...You come to a lovely thing called "form." Everybody's all screwed up about this.… Then there's "use." Some call it "function," but it's really ritual — the ceremony of using something with respect.[104]

While functionalist design was still practiced by Rose until his death, his meaning of function went beyond recreational necessity and entered the realm of spirituality. One respects an experience if they can be fully present within those moments. It is in those moments that the individual breaks through their perceived separation from the rest of the universe, and acknowledges the cosmic spirit that is within everything at once. While Rose's personal budget for the Ridgewood residence may have been limited, he compensated for capital value with the value of mindfulness. He spent time being

[104] Rose, *Gardens Make Me Laugh*, 129.

present in each space, respecting the potential of every material, and responding to the spirit emerging from the residence day by day.

Some additional design amendments Rose implemented at the Ridgewood residence included a repaving of the site using Pennsylvania bluestone slabs (Fig. 19, 22, 25), liberal installation of *Rhododendron maximum* shrubs (Fig. 20 & 22), curated arrangements of rocks found on his design sites, which he called “rock ikebana” (Fig. 21 & 22), sculptures created from scrap metal (Fig. 23, 24, 26), and the addition of several obtuse-angled reflecting pools (Fig. 20, 23, 25).

FIGURE 19 Saadia Rais, *Pennsylvania Bluestone Paving*, 2018, photograph.

FIGURE 20 Saadia Rais, *Large Pool with Rhododendron*, 2018, photograph.

FIGURE 21 Saadia Rais, *Rock Ikebana*, 2018, photograph.

FIGURE 22 Saadia Rais, *Rock Ikebana and Rhododendron*, 2018, photograph.

FIGURE 23 Saadia Rais, *Scrap Metal Mask Sculptures*, 2018, photograph.

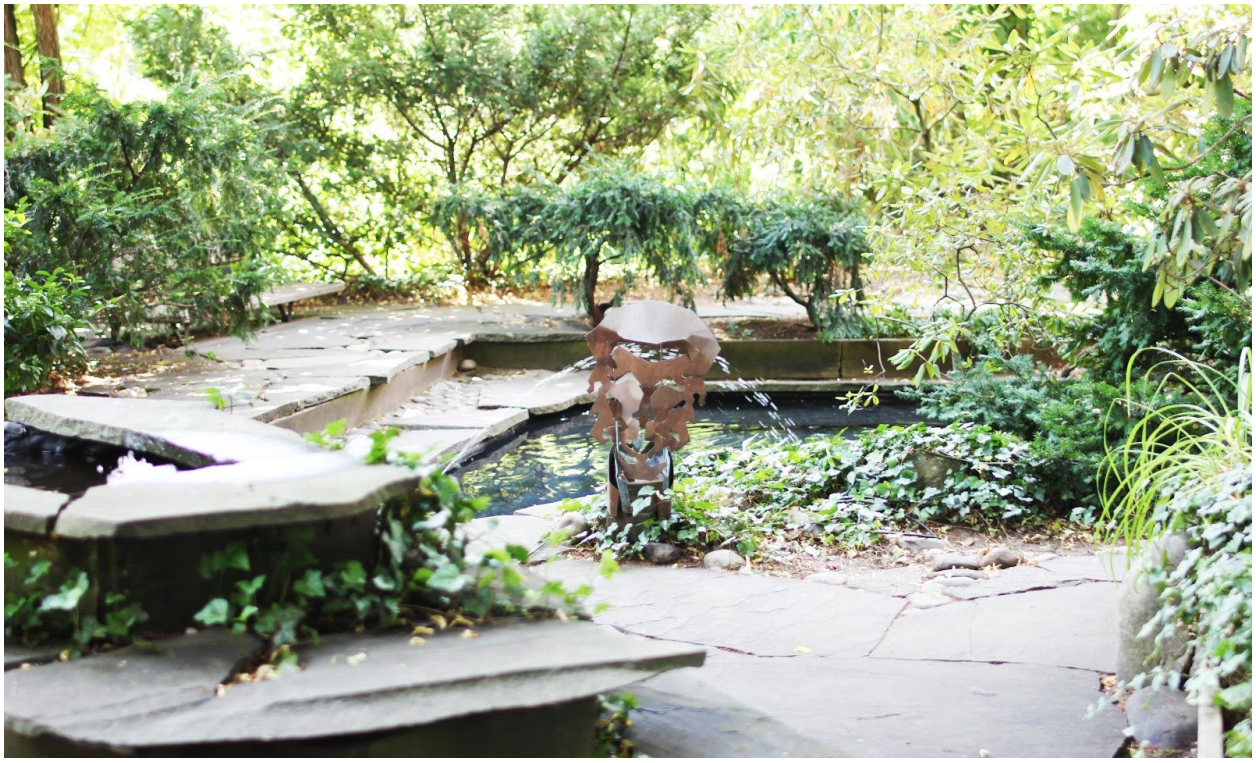

FIGURE 24 Saadia Rais, *Mask Sculpture at Pool*, 2018, photograph.

FIGURE 25 Saadia Rais, *Additional Pools*, 2018, photograph.

FIGURE 26 Saadia Rais, *Large Copper Fountain Sculpture*, 2018, photograph.

The rock ikebana (Fig. 21 and 22), as well as the scrap metal sculptures (Fig. 23, 24, and 26) were further iterations of Rose's transformation of found objects. The rock arrangements are akin to his use of existing trees on a site, part of his practice of including natural materials already at hand to a site's design. The scrap metal sculptures are akin to his use of railroad ties in a design, crafting new design creations out of leftover industrial materials. In describing the development of scrap metal sculptures on a factory site, Rose stated:

> During construction, I noticed that brass pipe and copper sheeting were available from stockpiles of material used in the factory, and suggested that a fountain could be made from these. Working with the craftsmen employed in the factory, we designed and built a fountain especially for that interior courtyard. We also experimented with copper lanterns and lighting fixtures. I had no idea what any of this was going to *look* like, but I had a very good feeling about what I hoped it would *be* like. So I allowed it to happen, and pretty soon it was like I always knew it would be — as it "wanted" to be.[105]

It would have been unlikely for Rose to have planned the addition of these brass and copper sculptures before visiting the site. In making room for improvisations on the site, Rose and his clients created new possibilities for design development with little to no increase in material costs. Beyond cost, there was also a sense of "now"-ness to the design process, allowing Rose to recognize the spirit and potential of the site and the

[105] Rose, *Gardens Make Me Laugh*, 41.

materials at hand. The act of improvisation was part of his creative freedom, letting his imagination meet a design within the moment and consider each element with attention and curiosity. One could say that Rose acted more as a *facilitator* of materials than an architect, a bricoleur assisting a design to *become* itself.

Rose saw himself not only as a facilitator of materials, but of the entire site. To him, an entire space (indoors and outdoors) is a sculpture that one can inhabit. Rose described the act of sculpting a site into a design:

> Now instead of imposing a "garden" on this site, let's say we simply sculpture the land — make a carving, as you would if you were doing a bas relief of something you cared about… to show its form more clearly. Not so much! Don't change it all around so I can't recognize it. Just make it more of what it already is.[106]

The act of sculpting, as Rose describes it, is much like the ceremony of respect (or ritual of function) that he characterized in a previous passage. Each element on a site, as well as the site as a whole, is part of the connected universe. To work with each aspect, Rose believed that a designer needed to get to know it, understand it, and see it as one with the inner self. Then, once connected, a designer could help the site be a more articulated version of what it already was.

For Rose, a landscape design is a process, not a product. It existed before the designer ever came to the site, and will continue to exist once the designer leaves. This

[106] Rose, *Gardens Make Me Laugh*, 147.

is especially true of landscape architecture, where most of the materials grow and change over time. So, too, should the design itself, as Rose stated:

> I can't think of it as a "creation" which you try to preserve. It's a process that starts wherever you are and never ends.… You're dealing with something that's already in motion after you've left and you've got to go with it because no matter where you start, it isn't the beginning and no matter where you leave off, it isn't the end.[107]

Rose's Ridgewood residence parcel was shaped by the Ho-Ho-Kus brook, the former trolley line running through Ridgewood, and the adjacent roads long before Rose purchased the land. He began conceptualizing the design for the residence during his enlistment in the Navy, adapting it to different plots of land until finally constructing it in Ridgewood. Once constructed, the design continued to change, adapting to the life changes of its occupants as well as to the physical changes that occurred to the materials and surroundings over time. The Modernist philosophies with which Rose designed his spatial arrangements (exemplified through fusion of shelter and landscape, creation of private outdoor spaces, and creative use of everyday materials) continued to manifest in the Ridgewood residence throughout his life, eventually enriched by his spiritual journey in Zen Buddhism. Time spent at Ridgewood residence presented the opportunity for connection between the inner self and the cosmic spirit.

[107] Rose, *Gardens Make Me Laugh*, 139.

CONCLUSION & EPILOGUE

Regardless of medium, there is no one definition of Modernism. While “Modern design” may conjure images of International Style residences, there is more to be considered in the context of Modernist landscape design. Broader conceptions of the world, shaped by new technologies and paradigm shifts, fundamentally changed society’s concept of *being*. The relationship between time and the material world took on new meaning, whether through Einstein’s theory of relativity or Darwin’s theory of evolution — or simply watching the world slip by through a train window.

During this time, artists and designers strove to develop a new style. They ended up with many - all unique expressions of modernity. James Rose’s expression of modernity was based on the concept of adaptation. He believed that the discipline of landscape architecture should adapt to modern conditions of living, and that landscape designs should flexibly adapt to the sites on which they are built and the needs of the people inhabiting them. His own residence in Ridgewood, New Jersey exemplifies this expression of modernity. Its design made extraordinary use of a scrap parcel, challenging suburban norms with its integration of shelter and private landscape spaces.

Rose’s Modernist beliefs aligned with Japanese traditions, especially those regarding nature, and Zen Buddhist philosophies. After his visits to Japan, he

incorporated these traditions and philosophies into his design practice. Rose's adaptive design techniques and integration of "landscape" and "architecture" were enriched by Zen spirituality, emphasizing mindfulness of the present moment as well as oneness between the inner spirit, nature and the universe. The design changes of the Rose's Ridgewood residence exemplified both his Modernist beliefs as well as his Zen Buddhist beliefs, unfolding as a narrative between time and the material world.

I had the unique opportunity to live and work at the Ridgewood residence during 2018. It currently functions as the James Rose Center for Landscape Architectural Research and Design. Indeed, Rose's design continues to live and adapt beyond his death in 1991, the same year I was born. As a recent occupant, I can confirm the spiritual connection that the center offers for those open to it. Rose's design constantly encouraged me to be present in the moment, whether I was leaf-blowing, giving a tour, or simply relaxing. During late afternoon naps, I could see shadows of foliage and sunlight reflecting off the pools through the ribbon windows by my bed. I would listen to the sounds of the breeze and bubbling fountains through the screen doors. I felt one with the natural elements of the universe, and with the present. Furthermore, I felt *held*. I would wait for the spectacle of shadows on particular surfaces at specific times of day, thankful to be alive (Fig. 27). During this time, something within me changed. I felt as though I finally recognized myself, and that I had a role in this endless cosmic drama. What that role is continues to unfold, but I found a renewed sense of respect for it and for myself. I ended a tumultuous marriage with my former spouse during my time there.

I took some time off from school before returning. I am still always learning from the Ridgewood residence and from James Rose — learning how to become.

FIGURE 27 Saadia Rais, *Shoji Screen Shadows at Ridgewood Residence*, 2018, photograph.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Cardasis, Dean. *James Rose: A Voice Offstage.* Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2017.

Cranston, Maurice. “Ideas and Ideologies.” *History Today* 39, no. 5 (May 1989): 10.

Descartes, René. *Discourse on Method*. New York: Macmillan, 1986.

Evans, Richard J. *Coming of the Third Reich*. New York: Penguin Press, 2004.

Foucault, Michel. “Right of Death and Power over Life.” In *The History of Sexuality*, 135-159. Translated by Robert Hurley. New York: Random House Inc., 1978.

Greenberg, Clement. “Modernist Painting” in *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays of Criticism*, edited by John O’Brian, 85-93. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986.

Howett, Catherine. "Modernism and American Landscape Architecture." In *Modern Landscape Architecture: A Critical Review,* edited by Marc Treib, 18-35. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993.

Hubbard, Henry Vincent and Theodora Kimball Hubbard. *An Introduction to the Study of Landscape Design*. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1917.

“International Style (modern European architectural style),” Art & Architecture Thesaurus Online, Getty Institute, last modified January 26, 2012, http://vocab.getty.edu/page/aat/300021472.

Laird, Mark. “John Claudius Loudon (1783-1843) and the Field’s Identity.” *Studies in the History of Gardens & Designed Landscapes* 34, no. 3 (Jul-Sept 2014): 248-253.

Mouzakitis, Angelos. “Modernity and the Idea of Progress.” *Frontiers in Sociology* 2, March 2017, https://doi.org/10.3389/fsoc.2017.00003.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. “125” in *The Gay Science*. Translated by Walter Kaufmann.

Ouspensky, P. D. *Tertium Organum*. Rochester: Manas Press, 1920.

Rose, James C. “Articulate Form in Landscape Design.” *Pencil Points* 20 (February 1939): 98-100.

Rose, James C. *Creative Gardens*. New York: Reinhold Publishing Corporation, 1958.

Rose, James C. “Freedom in the Garden.” *Pencil Points* 19 (October 1938): 639-643
.
Rose, James C. *Gardens Make Me Laugh.* Norwalk, CT: Silvermine Publishers; 1965.

Rose, James C. “Integration.” *Pencil Points* 19 (December 1938): 758-760.

Rose, James C., Daniel Kiley, and Garrett Eckbo. “Landscape Design in the Urban Environment.” *Architectural Record*, May 1939: 70-76.

Rose, James C. “Landscape Models.” *Pencil Points* 20 (July 1939): 438-448.

Rose, James C. “Plants Dictate Garden Forms.” *Pencil Points* 19 (November 1938): 695-697.

Rose, James C. “Why Not Try Science.” *Pencil Points* 20 (December 1939): 777-779.

Sorell, Tom. *Descartes: A Very Short Introduction*. Very Short Introductions. Oxford: OUP Oxford, 2000.

Steele, Fletcher. “New Pioneering in Garden Design.” *Landscape Architecture* 20, no. 3 (April 1930): 159-177.

Szczygiel, Bonj and Robert Hewitt. “Nineteenth-Century Medical Landscapes: John H. Rauch, Frederick Law Olmsted, and the Search for Salubrity.” *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 74, no. 4 (Winter 2000): 708-734.

Tabet, Simone. “Interview with Zygmunt Bauman: From the Modern Project to the Liquid World.” *Theory, Culture, and Society* 34, no. 7-8 (2017): 131–146. https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276417734902

Treib, Marc. "Axioms for a Modern Landscape Architecture." In *Modern Landscape Architecture: A Critical Review,* edited by Marc Treib, 36-67. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993.