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Title

Inflected Landscapes

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<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/16p968ff>

Journal

Places, 1(2)

ISSN

0731-0455

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Publication Date

1983-10-01

Peer reviewed

Inflected Landscapes

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Even the architects most committed to modernist imagery have admired the quality of anonymous folk architecture. Though their evaluation might have been based primarily on building shape or the appropriateness of materials and construction technology, the relation of folk buildings or villages to their sites rarely failed to elicit appreciation. Yet now, late in the current century, the isolated structure which stands in contrast to its landscape backdrop, with only the comfort of some transitional planting, represents the most common approach to siting the detached building. Were we to reconsider the range of possible building/topography relationships, we might realize that the object, in contrast to the landscape, is but one of three categories. The other two, often more harmonious, are the *merger* of building to site and/or the *inflected* landscape.

In spite of extended discussion of the “order of nature,” that order, at least in visual terms, is difficult to apprehend. The ordinary person, for example, finds little apparent pattern in the depth of the forest. The trees seem irregularly disposed; the mix of plant species belies no grand plan. From a vantage point sufficiently distant from the forest floor, however—high above in an aerial view or one afforded by a neighboring hill—an indisputable sense of order in the landscape emerges. Trees are seen to grow primarily in the narrow valleys or ravines where the excess runoff of the rains or underground seepage

provides more reliable sources of water. Certain species of trees thrive in these conditions, perhaps growing on just one side of the hill where the sun, wind, and moisture are most favorable to existence. Smaller plants occupy analogously appropriate locations on the land, deferring to the predominance of the trees and directed by other environmental factors. An order to the natural environment does, indeed, exist; but it is an order that may be understood better in conceptual, rather than perceptual, and biological, rather than visual, terms. Only with sufficient distance, or, conversely, with the extreme closeup of the microscope, is scrutiny rewarded with comprehension.

Industrial society tends to favor strong statements upon the face of the land whether by intention or benign lack of consideration. Because the sense of order is most difficult to perceive near the human scale, those making places have devised effective strategies for making order manifest. One approach dismisses noncontributing elements, fashioning gardens or sacred spaces by *omission*. The dry gardens of Japan, produced under the influence of Zen Buddhism within the Shinto religious tradition, evoke presence by actions such as clearing a plane within a forest, leveling a plane of territory, or arranging rocks as the subject within this contrived void. By reducing the garden elements to rock, gravel, and a few bits of moss, a garden

1 Ryoan-ji. Kyoto, Japan.

A classic example of the garden of omission: natural material within a framed void. (Photograph by Marc Treib, 1978)

2 Vaux-le-Vicomte. France.

Andre le Nôtre, c. 1660.
The garden of restatement: all elements refer to and augment the presence of the axis. (Photograph by Marc Treib, 1975)



such as Ryoan-ji in Kyoto eliminates extraneous distraction and focuses attention internally.

Restatement occupies a second category: the repetition of related forms and/or their alignments within an explicit ordering system, designed so that each fragment restates and contributes to the power of the whole. The line and the geometric figure are vehicles commonly employed to render this repetition apparent. The French formal garden, perfected in the seventeenth century by landscape architect Andre le Nôtre, is the principal representative of the type. The axis provides the overriding structure to which each element is referred, analogous to the bass line of the three-part, baroque musical composition. At the estate of Vaux le Vicomte, le Nôtre extended the primary axis from the oval salon of the château beyond the horizon. The geometrically rendered plant materials, clipped in a severe topiary nearest the château, reinforce the architectonic concept of the linear order. The treatment of the landscape becomes less mannered and more naturalistic as one moves away from the central

line and eventually dissolves into the surrounding woods.

In both instances the notion of garden implicitly constrains the relationship of the building to the landscape. At Ryoan-ji the garden exists only to be viewed: a trapped field of gravel and lithic composition, encircled by an oiled earthen wall. The space remains untrampled seen only from the veranda, a platform for meditation. At Vaux le Vicomte the garden and château are more firmly integrated, disposed along a single axis that weds natural to constructed elements. In both examples, however, the building stands free on its site, perceived as a discrete object.

In the past architects, builders, and landscape gardeners have also attempted to create picturesque or naturalistic landscapes and even naturalistic buildings. Gardens intended to replicate nature are more easily realized and are found in both the East and the West. The intention of merging structure with landscape, on the other hand, has rarely been achieved in an ideal form. Works such as Frank Lloyd

Wright's Kaufmann residence, "Fallingwater," or the Parc Guell by Antonio Gaudi probably interest us precisely because of their inability to merge completely with the natural contour—as if the very imperfection of the merger forms the basis of its success in terms of perceived order.

It is doubtful that a natural order could be truly replicated by architectural means. The act of construction, as the creation of places for habitation, work, worship, or pleasure, distinguishes these places from the preexisting order almost by definition. "Fallingwater," in spite of the prevalent myth, is hardly coincident with the landscape. The white, horizontal planes of the composition easily distinguish the house from the tone and form of the surrounding woods. As a balanced assembly the central fireplace-mass counters the sweep of the horizontal terrace-planes, locking the composition into equilibrium. Interestingly, these vertical masses, perpendicular to the ground, are constructed of field stone as if to diminish the disparity between intention and realization.



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3 “Fallingwater.” Bear Run, Pennsylvania.

Frank Lloyd Wright, 1938.

While striving for merger with its landscape, the structure is simultaneously distinguished from it.

(Photograph courtesy of the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy)

4 Parc Guell. Barcelona, Spain.

Antonio Gaudi, 1914.

The naturalistic forms and materials of the retaining wall soften the regularity of the order but cannot hide it.

(Photograph by Marc Treib, 1967)

5 “Double Negative.” Nevada.

Michael Heizer, 1969–1970.

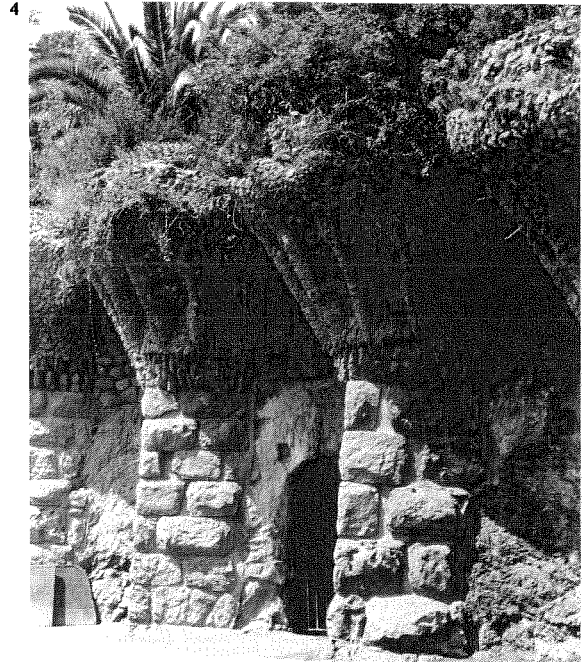
The sculpture is earth reformed.

(Photograph courtesy of Xavier Fourcade, Inc.)

6 Cliff Palace. Mesa Verde, Colorado.

Anasazi culture, eleventh to thirteenth centuries. The limits of the cave structure the ordering of the individual cells.

(Photograph by Marc Treib, 1981)



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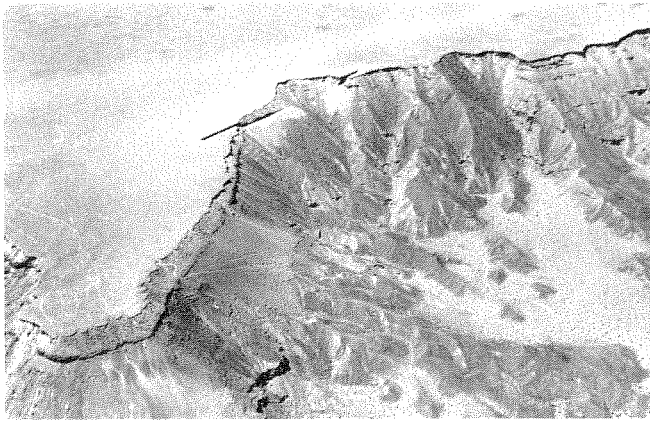
The composition, thus, deals with architectonic necessity—the selection of building materials with the intention of joining the house to the site.

A second example, the Parc Guell in Barcelona, was conceived as the first phase of a housing estate that was never completed. Built to designs by Antonio Gaudi and constructed by 1914, the meandering features of the park grow from the topography and native vegetation and would never be mistaken for natural surroundings. Even the most rustic of the park’s constructions, the stone retaining-wall with its crude caryatids, must be seen as an inflection of the land rather than a recreation of what had previously been present. Indeed its power—aside from its formal or chromatic beauty—lies in this *departure* from nature. Inflected landscapes such as this occupy that middle zone between the natural and the made, creating a state of soft tension that evokes a perceptual ambiguity between the identities of both the natural and the constructed. Contributing to this ambiguity, the exact nature of their

interrelationship seems to shift and change under differing environmental or temporal conditions.

A gradient of possible construction/natural site relationships might situate *merger* or coincidence (at least as an aspiration) at one end, and *distinction* at the opposite. Certain heroic modernist structures such as Le Corbusier’s Villa Savoye (1929) are examples of the latter category, although even in this striking instance the distinction of building from site is not absolute. The roof garden, the siting of the house, and even the rigid block geometry of the villa reflect on the landscape through contrast and contradiction. Definition derives from opposition: what the structure is not. Merger, on the other hand, is most clearly represented by the picturesque garden type, with the contrived park blended into the wooded surrounds. Constructed caves or follies serve as architectural examples in this instance, as do the more contemporary “bermed” or buried energy-concerned structures. Somewhere between the two extremes, though closer to merger, lies the landscape

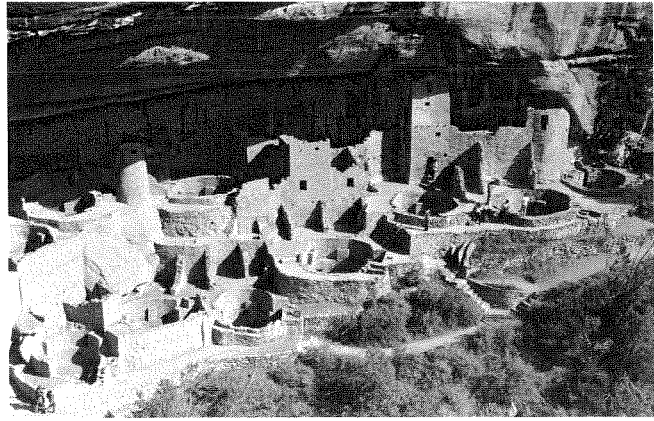
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of inflection: places that retain in part the natural order or material while articulating an order distinct from the natural form of the land, a distinction sufficient to generate a sense of entity.

In terms of pure landscape, works by sculptors such as Robert Smithson or Michael Heizer serve as excellent examples of this last category. In Smithson's "Spiral Jetty" (1970) the eloquent construction of natural materials into the controlled form of the spiral demarks a place that simultaneously occupies both zones of perception. The materials are native, common to the place, unworked; the order suggests metaphysical intention by the artist. Heizer's "Double Negative" (1967), formed of the earth it serves to articulate, consists of a simple cut into the surface of the mesa that aligns with a second scraped channel on the opposite slope. The gesture is simple albeit powerful; a gesture whose reductive simplicity contrasts obviously with the rugged and irregular edge of the mesa and the strata of the earth that comprise it. In both works the act of ordering, rather than the

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reforming and finishing of those materials employed, is basic to the making of the place.

Released from the burdens of function these earth sculptures are intended to be approached as art, and the ritual for their perception is preordained. Functional places for human habitation are another matter, though as strictly formal compositions both share common properties. The architecture of the Anasazi, built mostly from the ninth to twelfth centuries in the Four Corners area, closely parallels the mood of the earthwork sculptures. For the cliff dwellings of Mesa Verde the cave itself provided the superstructure, the frame into which each piece of the village was fit, each part adjusted to the whole. In this example, too, the construction material is the same as the mesa; but in the act of piling, chinking, and plastering the builders have fashioned regularly shaped dwellings within the irregular confines of the cave. At Pueblo Bonito in Chaco Canyon the ordering device is the formally conceived plan. The arc of the layout is developed in three major stages over time; only in its mature

phase does it complete the D-shaped composition of multistory apartments and round subterranean *kivas* that loosely face south.

The issue of appropriateness of building to topography, of merger or contradiction, arises here. Yet the very distinction of morphological orders, the *differences* rather than the similarities, I would suggest, are the sources of their power. Imagine in the place of these structures a naturalistic construction of an irregular cliff adjacent to the true escarpments. If the imitation were so perfect that it might be mistaken for the prototype, it would still possess none of the sense of history and record imbued in the natural strata. Would this imitation evoke the same sense of suitability or even awe that these native communities do—even in ruins?

But these dwellings are part of history. Technological and ecological necessity constrained their construction, restricting the builders to utilize the very materials of the site. What, then, might be parallel case studies from the modern era, in which the



7 Pueblo Bonito. Chaco Canyon, New Mexico.

Anasazi culture, eleventh to thirteenth centuries. The loosely south-facing D form of the grouping integrates the living cells and round subterranean kivas.

(Photograph by Marc Treib, 1983)

complexity of the twentieth century vastly complicates the problem at hand? There are two places in Scandinavia—of necessity in at least *semi* rural settings—which provide instances from which we might learn. In the first, the extension to the South Stockholm or Woodland Cemetery by Gunnar Asplund and Sigurd Lewerenz, the buildings and landscape serve as the balanced articulation of one another and in so doing announce their presence. In certain places the buildings form a literal edge to the forest—both distinct from the vegetation yet curiously akin to the trees. At the Villa Mairea, the second example, the relationship changes from a literal to an analogical or even metaphorical one. The structure of the house rationalizes and reinterprets the structure of the trees in the forest. A romantic appropriateness results, with the interior and its structural system maintaining a continual dialogue with the surrounding pines.

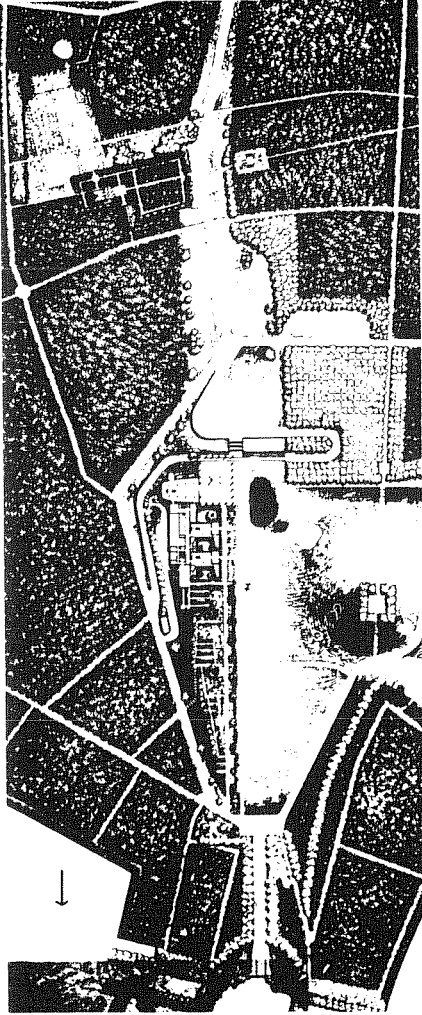
Erik Gunnar Asplund occupies a pivotal position in the history of Swedish architecture. As it had to Alvar Aalto and Erik Bryggmann in

Finland, the task of “converting” the Swedish population to an acceptance of modern architecture fell to Asplund, Sven Markelius, and several others. He accomplished this through his writings and, primarily, through the object lessons of his buildings. Today he is remembered for three major projects that crossed from modernism to classicism to a unique blend of the two. The first project, the Stockholm City Library of 1929, fused the heroic forms of Ledoux with the elegance of the modern idiom. Asplund also served as chief architect for the 1930 Stockholm Exposition, the first large-scale flowering of modernism in the North. And third Asplund’s work at the Woodland Cemetery exemplified his ability to conceive and execute a narrative landscape of trees and stone.

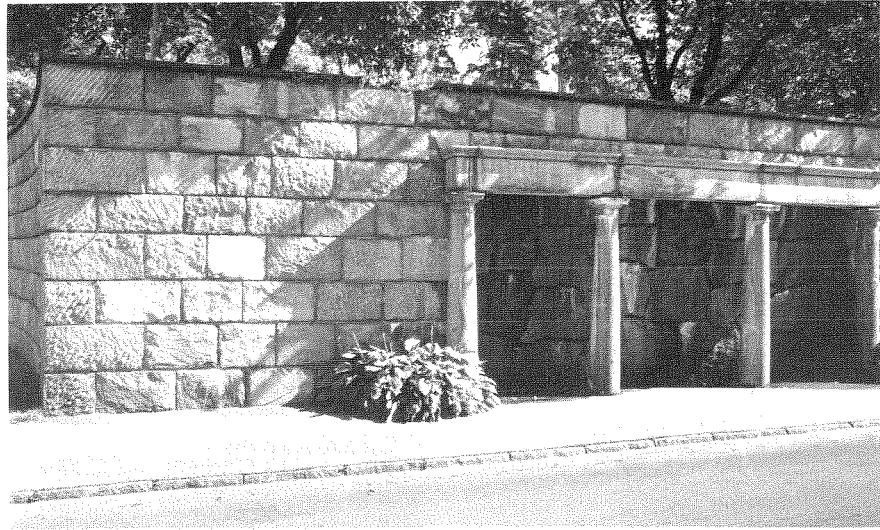
As early as 1918 Asplund had joined with Sigurd Lewerenz to design the cemetery and chapels for Skogskyrkogården or Woodland Cemetery. The buildings that he and Lewerenz built there, and their entire setting, constitute a superb representative of the use of contrasting orders. The preexisting

landscape of the site was covered with some stretches of pine forests, and a portion was cleared and used as a quarry. The first phase (1918–1920) included a master plan for the site that suggests little of its eventual complexity and detail. It contained some roads—some windy, some straight—and a neoclassical chapel by Lewerenz whose nave lies perpendicular to the axis it terminates.

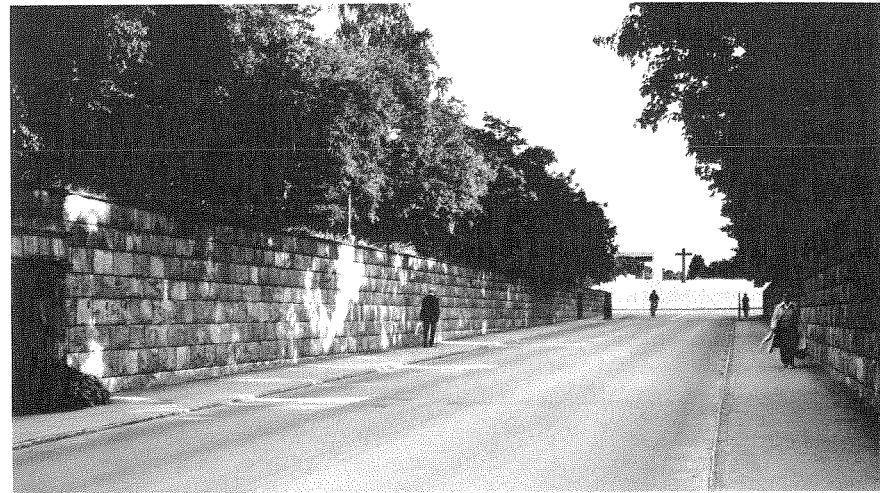
Asplund’s own architectural contribution from this period, the tiny Woodland Chapel, exemplifies an attitude toward building in the landscape that is characterized by an extreme sensitivity to both place and occasion. The form of the chapel suggests the wooden, country churches that dotted southern Sweden in the seventeenth century. Its sophistication reflects the polish of the Liselund villa in Møn, Denmark (built from 1792–1795 by Andreas Kirkerup), which was popular in Scandinavian architectural circles early in this century. The use of wooden shakes as a covering material determined the steeply pitched roof that dominated the image of the church.



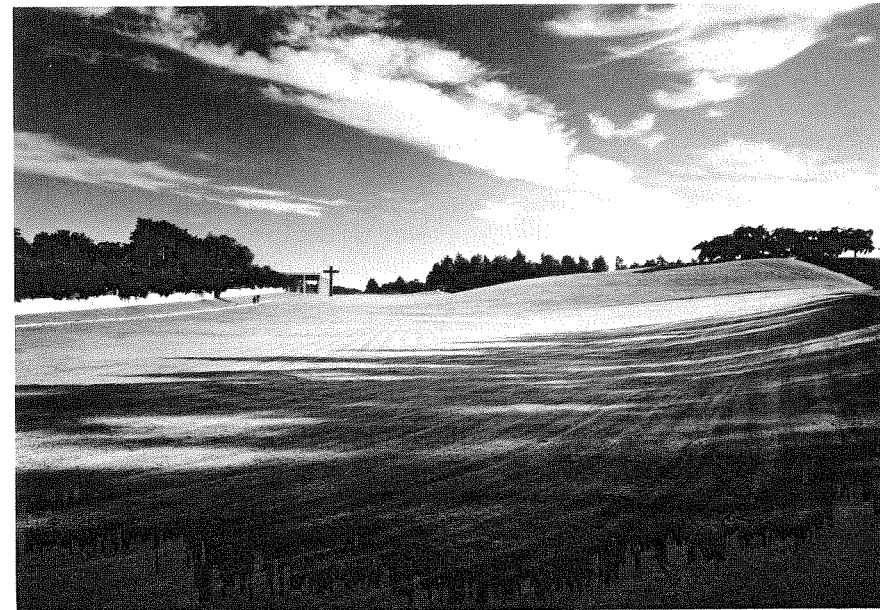
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8 Woodland Cemetery. South Stockholm, Sweden.

Erik Gunnar Asplund and Sigurd Lewerenz,
1915–1922.

Plan with entrance below.
(Plan courtesy of the MIT Press)

9 Woodland Cemetery

The slowly dripping fountain built within the
ashlar walls.

(Photograph by Marc Treib, 1982)

10 Woodland Cemetery

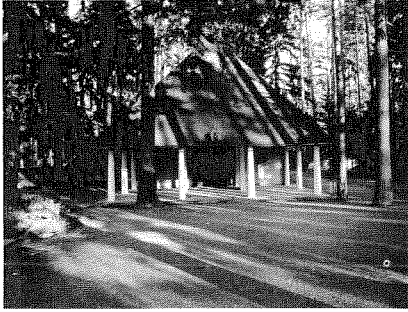
The high stone walls serve as blinders to
focus vision ahead, into the void.

(Photograph by Marc Treib, 1982)

11 Woodland Cemetery

Emergence into the void: the meditation
knoll to the right and the Chapel of the
Holy Cross to the left.

(Photograph by Marc Treib, 1979)



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12 Woodland Chapel, Woodland Cemetery.

Erik Gunnar Asplund, 1918–1922.
The chapel's profile recalls the country churches of seventeenth-century Sweden, but its execution is more decidedly classical. (Photograph by Marc Treib, 1979)

13 Woodland Chapel

The crypt, literally of the earth, reinforces the release of resurrection. (Photograph by Marc Treib, 1979)

14 Woodland Chapel

Within the small chapel, the pure world of the hemisphere and the flood of light invoke a sense of the celestial and pure. (Photograph by Marc Treib, 1979)

15 Chapel of the Holy Cross, Woodland Cemetery.

Erik Gunnar Asplund, 1935–1940.
Seen from the knoll, the portico and chapels strengthen the edge of the forest while retaining their own architectural identity. (Photograph by Marc Treib, 1982)

16 Woodland Cemetery

The open atrium of the portico admits light to the sculptural group and allows the eye to rise upward unimpeded. (Photograph by Marc Treib, 1982)

17 Woodland Cemetery

The trees on the knoll read as the natural precedent for the columns of the chapel's portico. (Photograph by Marc Treib, 1982)

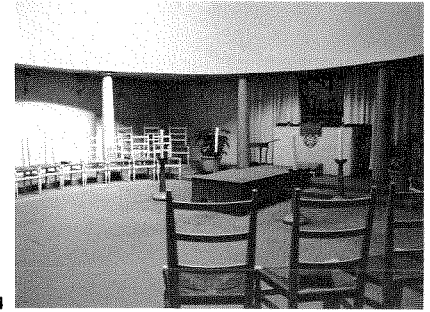


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Simple columns of a proto-Doric order elegantly support the shingled roof of Asplund's chapel. More important is the integration of the chapel compound with the remainder of the forest site.

A circumferential wall secures the chapel's courtyard, a wall too high to see over, too solid to see through. And yet, almost in the Japanese manner, one perceives the roof even beyond the wall. As one enters the gate, the expectation of a controlled world or the courtyard of omission is unfulfilled. Asplund has permitted the forest to penetrate and continue into the confines of the court. The architect typically spurns a simple yes or no decision and substitutes an ambiguity and a softness created by the admission of the trees into what should be a more formal space. The wall and the resulting courtyard inflect the texture of the forest, but they do not create a presence defined by an opposition to it.

Within the walled area in front of the chapel a crypt has been dug into the earth. Asplund sought no conflict with the chapel; the resurrection of the soul and hope for the living, not the mortal body, was consequential. By burying the crypt Asplund reduced it to a mere inflection of the earth's surface. Architecturally a parallel transition occurs, though its progression has been inverted. From the rough, shingled exterior of the chapel one envisions a folksy, dark, brooding wooden interior in the manner of the country churches. In its place,

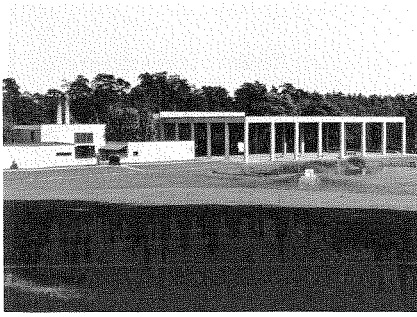


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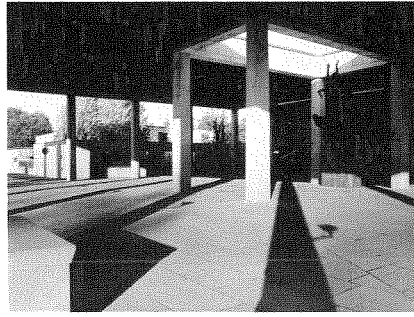
the chapel radiates the rationally pure vocabulary of the cube and the hemisphere. Light pours down through the rooflight, flooding the dome and the interior beneath it. The eye is drawn magnetically upward. The architect orchestrates the sequence of movement and view; the path leads from the natural, to the inflected natural, to the highly wrought, to the celestial.

Asplund worked at Skogskyrkogården from 1935 to 1940 to complete the transformation of the landscape and the construction of a series of larger chapels. The canonical view of the largest of these, the Chapel of the Holy Cross, is justifiably famous, and the place is imbued with a sense of the religious earlier than the iconography of its stone cross. In totality, the cemetery is marked by repose and silence, by the uncanny calm that Ingmar Bergman depicted in his film *The Seventh Seal*, the calm that comes just before the first rays of dawn, just after the first snowfall, or when twilight turns to night.

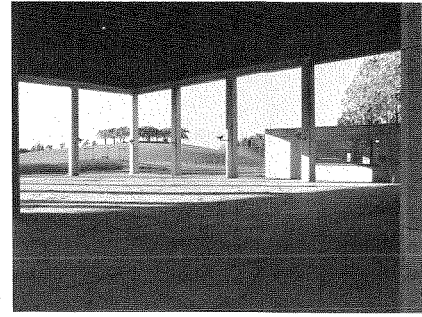
The site-plan of the complex shows no real axes though the straight wall of chapels and burials provide the planar splint that structures the landscape as an entity apart from the natural pattern of the pines. Around the entryway to the cemetery the design is uncompromisingly rigid, but, again, in the Japanese manner, it softens to semiformal and informal order within the precinct of the cemetery proper.



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Today one disembarks from the subway train at the station “Skogskyrkogården,” Woodland Cemetery. The station and its immediate environment are typically modern; nothing much marks them as special. To the right of the station a small flower stand provides the first hint of the cemetery’s presence, and beyond it extends a formal row of pleached trees, clipped and fixed in time, that defines the spatial corridor leading to the semicircular exedra of the main entrance. From this point the road leads directly into the cemetery grounds. Two stone walls frame the road and entrance; the iron gates are left open during the day. A fountain is built within one wall and housed in a small, classical portico. The fountain neither drips nor flows; the slow movement of its waters is barely sufficient to mark the passage of time—there is something eternal about it. Looking through the confining stone walls one is led into the void and to the grass below and the sky above.

The order feels natural. From the rigidity and the straight geometry of the stone walls, which like blinders focus the eyes directly ahead, one is pulled to the soft undulations of the gently rolling valley. In summer the grass is very green and the sky is very blue. Powerful cloud formations often pepper the blue dome and give it contour. But our attention falls almost immediately on the stocky, stone-cross icon; detached from the chapels it stands as a monument, an element, and an independent entity.

Quickly now we are drawn to the structures, to the line of chapels and their stone walls running to our left, paralleling the path—a line across the land that runs over the hills, through the woods, to the horizon. But to our right, atop the knoll, a formation of trees feels too regular to be natural, yet its vegetation appears too unkempt to have felt the hand of the gardener. The knoll straddles the edge between the natural and the made.

We proceed to the left along the stone path through which the meadow’s grass meanders. Along the way the rhythm of the graves within the court emerges. Our eyes, directed straight ahead, rest in the interval between the cross and the chapel; the view remains untruncated. Nearing the building we note the portico, the sculptural group thrusting through the open atrium that provides both the needed illumination and a hint of the impending resurrection. We move from the open field, to the restricted spatial channel, to the roofed portico, to the open sky above, through the doors to the chapel. The totality is contrived with consideration.

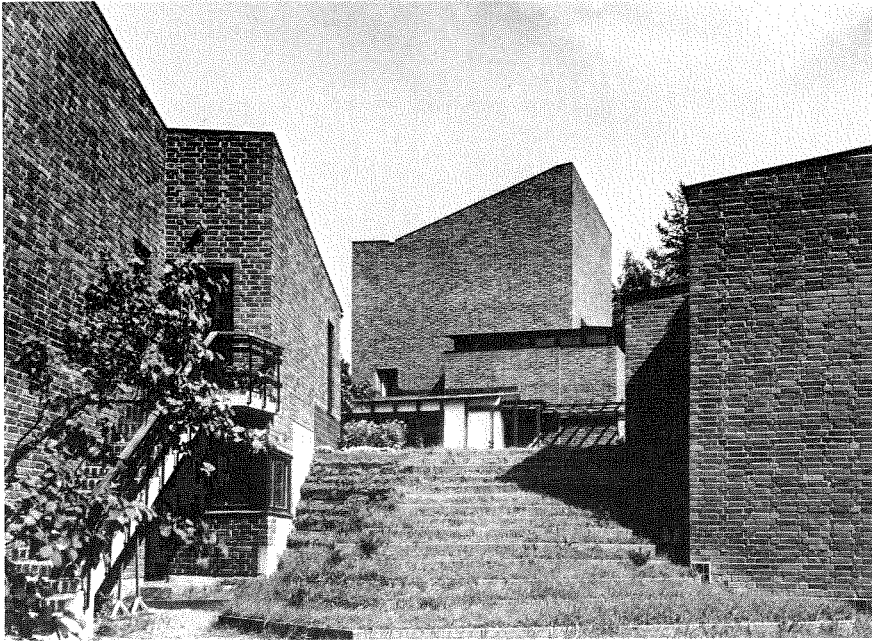
From the knoll one can look back to the Chapel of the Holy Cross and view the buildings that are so carefully fitted into the landscape—and, yet, so strongly expressive of the architectonic order. A patio ringed by low fieldstone walls and a square of trees crown the knoll, a configuration apparent only when seen on the crest. It, too, shares

both orders. The grove of birches we pass through seems natural at first, although it has been laid out and planted with the mathematical regularity of an orchard. Its order reflects, in natural materials, the rhythm of the portico colonnade that it addresses across the meadow. But this is summer.

In winter another world emerges. The green is now white, and the buildings are the darker rather than the lighter forms. It is beauty of, perhaps, an even higher order, particularly in the afternoon when the sun slashes across the land and almost parallels its contours. Trees that were mass are now linear skeletons. Light defines the soft topography of the surface. This place would feel sacred even to someone lacking an understanding of Christian religious symbols.

At Woodland one senses the coexistence of people and nature as part of a continuity. One order comments on and, in turn, defines the other—like the figure and ground of a two-dimensional composition. It is difficult, almost impossible, to look at one without looking and sensing the existence of the other. This continuous reflection and alternation of perception, rather than the architectural forms alone, ultimately yields a state of harmony and equilibrium.

Across the Gulf of Bothnia in Finland, Alvar Aalto began his private architectural practice in the 1920s. During the decade he



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18 Town Hall. Säynätsalo, Finland.

Alvar Aalto, 1952.
Rationalized contours shape the grass stairs, which reflect their granite counterpart on the court's opposite side.
(Photograph courtesy of the Museum of Finnish Architecture)

19 Villa Mairea. Noormarkku, Finland.

Alvar Aalto, 1938.
The combinations of saplings supporting the entrance canopy—still with their bark—introduce the theme of the column.
(Photograph courtesy of the Museum of Finnish Architecture)

constructed two landmark buildings: the Turun Sanomat newspaper offices and the Paimio tuberculosis sanatorium. Like the Stockholm Exhibition that influenced Aalto, the sanatorium introduced Finland full-tilt to modernism—in a manner and to a degree that would never really be equaled.

Just as Asplund appears uncomfortable with the severely architectural order within the natural setting, so Aalto shares an equal distaste for the completely rectilinear. As early as the Paimio project he displayed some of Le Corbusier's delight with the contrast of the curve against the "rectilinearity" of the main block. The foil of the free-form entry canopy or the later reception booths play against the straight planes of the walls, as does the sensuous wave of the lecture hall ceiling at the roughly contemporary Viipuri library.

One could find no better example of this particular formal predilection than the "typical" Aalto libraries at Seinäjoki or Rovaniemi. In these buildings the rectangularity of the offices, class rooms, service rooms, and entrance oppose the fan-shaped, phototropic angularity of the principal reading rooms. One can see that, like the made versus the natural, the presence of the straight defines the presence of the curve and vice versa.

Aalto, in an analogous manner, uses

architecture as an orthogonal contrast to nature and the natural as the mitigating force against architecture. In his studio in Munkkiniemi, for example, the interior court is a grand bite carved from the quiet rectangular block that fronts the street. Within this concavity, the earth terraces in boarded contours to fashion an architecture of earth. A more dramatic application appears in the great grass staircase at Säynätsalo, where the steps actually geometricize the natural slope, or those contours resulting from filling the central court. The earth is permitted to ooze out from the upper level in a rather controlled and rationalized manner.

At Seinäjoki the earth mounds against the south wall of the town hall in sweeping angular contours that appear in profile as the roof of the council chamber. The fluid curve of nature becomes, in Aalto's hand, the segmented curve, more easily constructed, rationally determined, an appropriate transition between nature and architecture.

The Villa Mairea, built in 1939 near Noormarkku in western Finland, illustrates many properties of Aalto's involvement with the curve and the inherent order in nature. The villa was constructed for Mairea and Harry Gullichsen, noted patrons of the arts and the inheritors and builders of a considerable industrial conglomerate. As a family estate the site already possessed two major

residences including a sprawling villa built about the turn of the century. Pine woods cover the land; grass grows underfoot. The topography exhibits few dramatic changes as the land slopes slightly over the granite bedrock.

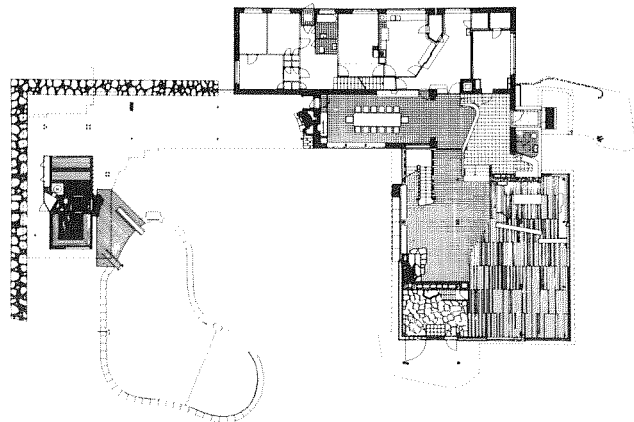
A nearly regular grid of columns supports the interior spaces of the house and augments the bearing provided by the walls. The treatment of the columns, however, betrays little regularity. Aalto has rationalized the forest; from the very first to the very last, no column has been left untreated: modifications link one column to another or distinguish it from the next. Some columns are primarily structural, yet are treated aesthetically; others are used only for architectonic purposes.

Approaching from the south we see the principal facade with its angled bay windows and the free curve of the projecting entrance canopy that recalls Paimio. Upon closer investigation we see that the canopy is curiously supported: On the right is a thick concrete column, no doubt the primary support. But the column has been wrapped with unpeeled saplings. On the left side a group of poles of slightly larger diameter, that have been joined by lashing, contribute to the structure. One recalls the more romantic aspects of Aalto's work such as his pavilion at the 1937 Paris Exposition, and the earlier Turku Fair, and the period from 1880 to 1905 that is known in Finland as national romanticism, during which

various architects and artists built their own villas in the manner of vernacular farmhouses.

Entering the house at the lower level, the view is controlled. A railing reads as a wall from the entry side; a number of nonstructural poles form a screen and suggest the saplings outside. Some fall on the entryside and some on the opposite—Aalto obscures the clarity of the intervening wall, and the spaces begin to blend. Stepping up the few steps toward the living room, a black lacquered column comes into sight. It is wrapped with split rattan, a treatment that Aalto would use in many later projects, particularly when he substituted in civic buildings marble or granite for the fragile rattan. Further along are double columns bound in tandem. Throughout the lower floor no two columns seem alike although they are regularly placed and share the same palette of materials.

Turning back, one sees the main staircase to the second floor inserted between the living and dining rooms. It is contained within its own forest of poles, some of which are plugged together like the canopy saplings at the entrance. The vines have overgrown the staircase and complete the naturalistic metaphor. The structural approach is augmented by a myriad other, considerate details used throughout the site, such as the fence and hillside that articulate the pool area in a



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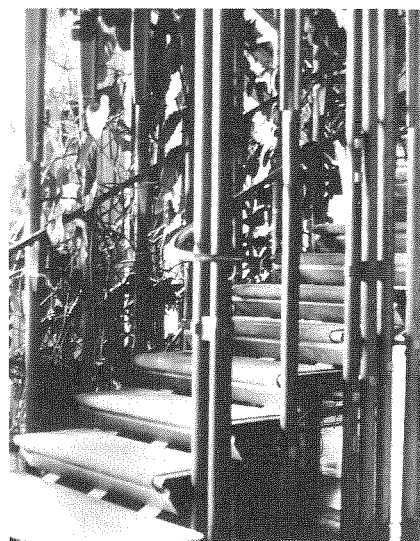
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20 Villa Mairea

Plan. The regular spacing of the columns structures the individual, unequal treatment.
(Photograph courtesy of the Museum of Finnish Architecture)

21 Villa Mairea

A screen of poles at the lower entrance level—stripped of bark in this variation—leads to the living room beyond.
(Photograph courtesy of the Museum of Finnish Architecture)

22 Villa Mairea

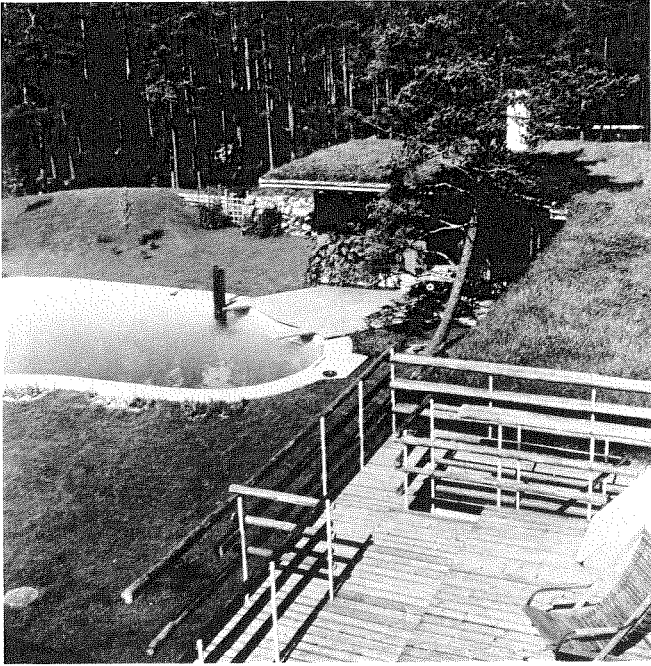
The twin black-lacquered columns in the “winter” area of the living space are bound in rattan to the height of the fireplace mantel.
(Photograph courtesy of the Museum of Finnish Architecture)

23 Villa Mairea

In the “spring” area of the living room the columns vary in clustering and wrapping.
(Photograph courtesy of the Museum of Finnish Architecture)

24 Villa Mairea

The vines covering the principal stair complete the metaphor of the column and the forest.
(Photograph by Marc Treib, 1967)



constructed mound, or the sod roof on the sauna and connecting loggia.

Reminiscent of the path from the forest to the light at Asplund's early Woodland Chapel, Aalto brings the natural order into the house, reforms it, and rationalizes it through a gradual and consistent restructuring of its form. The transition is smooth. The house is articulated not only as a place with its own order and sense of identity but also as a place that shares certain morphological sympathies with the forest around it.

At the Woodland Cemetery and at the Villa Mairea the construction of places exists apart from the natural order and yet fits comfortably within it. The structure is not an isolated machine in the garden; a synthesis of the pieces and their orders exists. The edge between the two is ambiguous and blurred. As one squints at the pieces certain parts of the setting come sharply into focus and other parts soften and become cloudy. In the end, we cannot quite rest in a state of complete knowledge nor can we accept the information given as exhaustive and unchanging. Nor

can we accept as given and finite the reactions and emotions to which those perceptions are linked.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to thank the following people for their help in the preparation of this article: for critical review, Professors Lars Lerup and Mary McLeod; for sharing his knowledge of Sigurd Lewerenz's work at the Woodland Cemetery, Professor Janne Ahlin, Lund Technical University, Sweden; and for photographs, Kristiina Nivari and the Museum of Finnish Architecture, Helsinki.

Travel and research for this study were aided by sabbatical funding from the University of California, Berkeley, and a Senior Fulbright Lectureship from the U.S. Educational Foundation in Finland, 1982.

25 Villa Mairea

To soften the profile of the house against the landscape, sod covers the roof, the sauna, and connecting passage. (Photograph courtesy of the Museum of Finnish Architecture)