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Reed Garden [The Inhabited Landscape: An Exhibition]

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Reed Garden

Jury Comments

The Reed Garden is an extraordinary sequence of refined experiences, with paths through the landscape surrounded by markers, axes, pavilions and self-reflecting images that translate a walk through the woods, a swim or a tennis match into experiences with cultural resonances from the past.

The garden is the result of a ten-year collaboration between architect and client. At the inception of the work there was no overall master plan or program for the entire woodland site overlooking a reservoir. The garden was designed incrementally, each completed piece suggesting further possibilities, expansions and refinements.

The garden was envisioned as growing out of the existing Federal-style country house, as well as contrasting with that house as a world of its own making. Each “room” serves a specific need and exists on its own, yet the various parts are linked to form a cohesive, yet varied, setting.



A

Architect's Statement

The ongoing goal was to make a great and magical garden that accommodated the typical requirements of luxurious American country living—swimming pool, tennis court, etc.—within a loosely structured landscape conceived and developed both as a specimen garden and a work of art; a garden-to-live-in, taking its clues from and growing out of the existing house, as well as a world of its own making. While each stage was to serve its own specific need and use and exist on its own,

the various parts when taken together were intended to form a cohesive, linked and varied setting.

Formally the idea was to make a garden of architecture that struck a subtle and harmonious balance between the natural and the man-made; between the existing site and its flora, rolling high canopied woods with vistas to the water, a series of more intimate and articulated outdoor rooms, walkways, tunnels, terraces and glades; between more precise and colder architectural

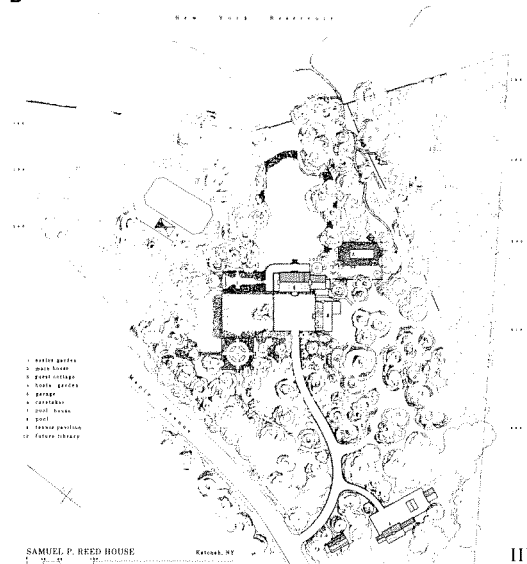
elements—pavilion, arbor, gate, fence, wall, path, statue, urn, ornament—and softer, more luxuriant plant material, each emphasizing the qualities of the other.

The property centers around a large house—high-roofed, white clapboard—its arrival court and dependencies. Each portion of the surrounding garden forms a progressive link of sequential places that all but encircle this central existing complex. The garden architecture closest to the house—the swimming

pool terrace to the east and azalea garden fences to the west—are painted white, reflecting in color and detail the house itself. As one moves farther away from the house precinct—to the hosta garden, tennis court, wisteria arbor—the elements are dark green, blending with the lush natural forest. The pavilions are simple, sturdy and practical—very “Yankee”—their enrichment being in the elaboration of their wood detailing. While certain of the outdoor rooms are for active sport and active gardening, these are always interspaced with quieter, more contemplative areas. The passage through the garden like that through the day, contrasts activity and reflection, sunshine and shade, heat and coolness, reality and fantasy.



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A Reed Garden
Photograph by Langdon Clay

B Reed Garden
Photograph by Langdon Clay

C Reed Garden, site plan