

face made it more difficult to read or scan.

Volume III and those that follow need to keep a balance with a sufficient number of significant designers in each volume so that the value of any one volume isn't diminished. If the same rate of publication is maintained, it will take a minimum of ten volumes and should be completed around 2011 with the current database. It would be a travesty if the intention is to ride the wave of current preservation interest, providing a "spark for more preservation activities," without following through to completion of this effort. We can only hope that the interest and funding can be sustained for that period of time so that we can achieve a comprehensive source book. As a final product, I would hope for an aggregation of all volumes into a single publication, including those names that were purposefully omitted.

It is understandably difficult to review a work in progress as compared to a completed work. There may be more critical comment here than accolades. I trust that it will not outweigh the value of the contribution of this publication to the public and will be taken as constructive criticism.

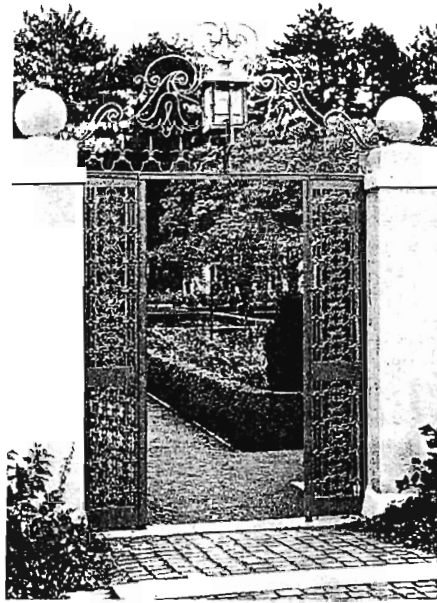
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THE MUSES OF GWINN: ART AND NATURE IN A GARDEN DESIGNED BY WARREN H. MANNING, CHARLES A. PLATT, AND ELLEN BIDDLE SHIPMAN, by Robin S. Karson. Sagaponack: Sagapress, 1995. x + 204 pages, epilogue, appendices, notes, index, \$39.95 clothbound.

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Reviewed by Iain M. Robertson

The Muses of Gwinn is an erudite but eminently readable account of the history of a particularly fine house and estate developed during the Country Place Era. Robin Karson traces the history of the estate, and describes its owner William Gwinn Mather, and its



From *The Muses of Gwinn*, by Robin S. Karson, published by Sagapress, Inc. Photograph by Carol Betsch.

designers, the "Muses" of the title, throughout this glittering era of opulent but refined elegance which began at the turn of the century and continued until the Second World War. Her account is meticulously researched and makes excellent use of drawings, photographs, and correspondence from the estate's archives and the archives of architect Charles Platt and landscape architects Warren Manning and Ellen Biddle Shipman.

The book artfully weaves the threads of cultural context, site conditions, and the lives and motives of client and designers into a tapestry that brings to life the history of this twenty-seven-acre estate on the shore of Lake Erie. It begins by setting the stage for the project, which started in 1907, and continues to the death of Mather in 1951. What makes this study particularly fertile is that Mather lived at Gwinn for forty-three years and worked with the designers during this period. Karson's sensitive depiction of people, place, and period draws readers of this delightful book into the story of Gwinn.

Karson's knowledge of her subject permits the history to unfold with grace and ease. She brings order and clarity to an immense and varied body of information in a way that is scholarly but never pedantic. Illustrations and appendices beautifully complement her lucid text. Well-chosen period photographs, reproduced in beautiful sepia tone, and a generous use of plans, sections, elevations, and details elucidate the text admirably. Careful attention to the placement of photographs and drawings indicates the care that author and publisher have exercised in assembling this piece of scholarship into a readable and enjoyable whole. Appendices containing lists of plants used by Shipman and Manning in specific gardens demonstrate the breathtaking extent of the work and the designers' commanding assurance and illustrate the impoverishment of contemporary landscapes in comparison.

The book is divided into two parts, the first providing background to the estate's development. The larger second part documents *The Story of Gwinn*. Background chapters include a brief introduction to Gwinn and three excellent essays which set the cultural stage and introduce the client and design protagonists. Chapter Two, "Formal and Informal Design in the Country Place Era," deftly describes the "mood" of the times and the design dynamics that pervade the story. These include debates on the merits of formal and informal, or natural, design styles; the search for an authentically American style of design; and the growing importance of "functionality."

The chapter on Platt, Manning, and Shipman contains sensitive portraits of the designers who contributed to Gwinn. These sketches highlight commonalities and differences among their lives and design philosophies. Karson uses these to aid our understanding of their interaction—tensions and cooperation—at Gwinn. The human and artistic tension between formalistic Platt and naturalistic Manning, for example, proved to be beneficial to the design of Gwinn. The final background chapter describes the family, professional, and personal life of the estate's owner, William Gwinn Mather. Mather lived

at Gwinn for forty-three years and died there at the age of ninety-three. One of the book's threads describes how this "captain of industry" came to know and cherish this place.

Part Two documents the development and management of the estate from site selection, through design and construction, to the end of Mather's life in 1951. "Locating a Site" begins in 1905 when Mather, at age forty-five, left his family home. Mather had already used Manning's landscape-architectural and planning services for his business developments; thus, it was natural for him to enlist his assistance in his search for a home site. He eventually selected five acres on Lake Erie but chose Platt as his principal designer, despite Manning's evident and stated interest in serving in this capacity. Thus the tension between this pair of designers existed from the project's inception.

The next chapters cover designing the house and the gardens. These are followed by chapters which detail subsequent additions to the property: "Refinements;" "Taming the Wild Garden;" and "The Fountains of Gwinn." In these five chapters, which are the heart of the book, Karson describes the evolving relationships between house and gardens and the site, and the developing relationships between client and designers. They trace the way in which the house's formal style eventually pervades all parts of the estate, from the sea wall, through the sculpture and detailing of terraces and formal gardens, to the "wild" garden.

Karson describes the siting of the house and the decisions about its relationships to the shore, the bluff, and the openings that existed in the woods. From these considerations she traces the design of house, and the layout, the spacing and sequencing of its surrounding gardens, and their embellishment with tea houses, greenhouses, pools, fountains, sculpture, statuary, and seats. She also provides detailed descriptions of the planting of individual gardens. Particularly successful is the way Karson demonstrates how each "refinement" was conceived to address a specific

design need but also consciously considered in the light of how it would enhance the estate's overall experience. Although each step toward this eventual unity is carefully documented, Gwinn's designers, and Karson, never lose sight of the whole composition. It is the unity of the whole and the richness of supporting detail which make the estate such a successful design.

Gwinn's story might have ended here with a fine house and elegant formal gardens had not Mather taken a decisive step in 1912 and purchased an adjacent twenty-one acres of land. Here he commissioned Manning to develop a wild garden, "The Big Wild Garden." This addition to the estate led to a whole new development and a decisive shift in the dynamic between landscape architect and architect, and naturalistic and formal design styles. As Karson says, "Manning was undoubtedly pleased, especially since the first wild garden had recently been so thoroughly Italianized." Indeed, Platt's Italianate predilections had prevailed through the introduction of a formal fountain at the center of the wild garden, and a pergola of Veronese marble columns. The new garden allowed Manning to express an entirely different, more naturalistic, design philosophy, and he proceeded to do so with assurance and verve. To the credit of designer and client, this garden became the antithesis, but also the complement, of the formal estate.

Manning's enthusiasm for the project is evident from the fact that he had a preliminary plan for the new garden a month after receiving his client's initial letter. Karson's thoroughness again considers all aspects of this garden's development. In her detailed description of site design and planting, Karson includes a discussion of the critically important contribution of the estate's gardener, Jacques, to the project and his relationship to Manning. The fact that site clearing and planting required a work force of forty men over a three-month period hints at the scale of the project. But it is the bewildering variety of plants that most dramatically conveys the work's scope. As Karson's describes it: "The quantities and varieties of plants used in the new garden

were extraordinary. Sixteen boxcar loads of five hundred rhododendrons each were dug in Damascus, Virginia, and planted the first year. Four hundred sacks of peat, also from Virginia, were sent to enrich the stiff soil. In addition to rosebay, Carolina, and catawba rhododendrons, the cars also contained mountain laurel and thousands of square feet of hear leaf wild ginger, Canada wild ginger, and American maidenhair."

This was by no means all. Thousands more plants were propagated on the estate or imported from Wisconsin, New Jersey, North Carolina, Illinois, and Holland. The photographs of these, alas, ephemeral garden compositions are amongst the most beautiful in the book. They illustrate the garden's sumptuous but subtle beauty and variety and remind us that planting designs of this scale and complexity are inconceivable today. In describing the work on the wild garden, the only factors that unfortunately fail to receive adequate attention are the ways the designer assessed and responded to the heavy clay soils and the fact that the Cleveland site possessed a more demanding climate than those of many of the plant sources. Manning's success in this design is confirmed by Karson's observation that "Mather grew to love his new garden, perhaps even preferring it, as Manning had foreseen, to the geometric elegance of the home grounds."

The final chapters, "The Middle Years," "The Depression Years," and "Renewal," carry the history from the teens to the Second World War. No major construction occurred during these years. However they were neither static nor uneventful in Gwinn's evolution or in the lives of its owner and designers. Changes were smaller in scale and related more to maintenance than new development but are no less significant. During this time Shipman made planting proposals for the formal garden, and Manning continued to advise on seasonal planting and maintenance. Jacques, the original estate gardener, died in 1923, and Mather, at the age of seventy-one, married his neighbor, Elizabeth Ireland, in 1929. Platt died in 1933 aged

seventy-two. As Karson notes, "The artistic legacies of Platt, Manning, and hundreds of their colleagues were quickly obscured by changing tastes and fortunes." The story not only of Gwinn but of the period that created and sustained it was coming to an end.

Nevertheless Gwinn successfully adapted to the permanent social and economic changes precipitated by the stock market crash. Mather weathered the Depression, and the estate survived intact but not unchanged. Gwinn's survival may largely be due to Mather's economic circumstances, but Karson also credits its transition through these times to the strength of the bond that had developed between Mather and Manning. In 1933 Manning wrote to Mather, "I will surely stop to see you, who are among my dearest and oldest friends, whenever I can."

The Muses of Gwinn is an artfully composed and lovingly presented piece of scholarship. Professionals and academics might nevertheless question its relevance to our contemporary lives and lifestyles—or, to be more accurate, our contemporary work-styles—since the compulsions of work seem to consume our post-modern lives. Modern and post-modern readers, as we claim to be, and baptized, as we are, in the purifying waters of political and ecological correctness, we might be embarrassed to admit that we occupy the same century and are fascinated by the work of unregenerate industrialists such as Mather and designers who served his sumptuous but exacting taste with Italianate designs and developed "ornamental" rather than "natural" wildernesses. The question therefore remains, "Can the people and project described in this book say anything of consequence to our fast-paced, bottom-line-driven, technology-crazed world?"

That we can answer this question affirmatively reveals the book's greatest worth. This is not merely history as chronology but living history. Karson instructively elucidates the inevitable tensions between the eternal triumvirate: client, site, and site and designers, and her conclusions remain applicable today. *The Muses of Gwinn* is not simply an account of a period that seems more akin to Medici Florence than our own

recent past. It is a study of the living interaction of the same forces that interplay in contemporary design: clients, designers, and the land, and the historical and socio-cultural context within which these interact. Thus the book amply rewards our attention if we but learn the invaluable lesson of client-designer relations summed up in letters exchanged by Mather and Manning toward the ends of their lives. In 1936 Mather wrote, "You have been so helpful to me . . . that I wish to have a good picture of yourself which I can frame properly and hang . . . in my house." Manning sent one and replied, "I would like very much to have a picture of you for my room as you have been one of my most valued friends for so many years."

Karson skillfully traces the intertwined history of a thoughtful client, Mather, three talented designers, Platt, Manning, and Shipman, and the magnificent estate which they created. From this story she gracefully teases out eternal design lessons. These are: the importance of truthfulness to site and program and the need for mutual trust among client, designers, and maintainers. Reading *The Muses of Gwinn*, we cannot but conclude that these lessons are even more applicable in our own frenetic and distracted times than they were during the more sedate but no less passionate Country House Era. This magnificently researched and written book provides insight and inspiration for our own work in our own times.

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BETWEEN LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE AND LAND ART, by Udo, Weilacher. Basel, Berlin, Boston: Birkhäuser, 1996. 247 pages, general bibliography, index, acknowledgments, \$98.00 clothbound. ISBN 3-7643-5316-3 (Basel) ISBN 0-8176-5316-3 (Boston)

Reviewed by Patricia McGirr

Landscape architects have often engaged in debating the distinction between landscape architecture and land art. Rather than differentiate, *Between Landscape Architecture and Land Art* sets out to explore the areas in which these two fields overlap. For landscape architects interested in these intersections, this book is guaranteed to inspire.

Although the book is primarily concerned with presenting the work of twelve individual designers, Weilacher begins by laying the groundwork for this type of landscape intervention. The history of the land art movement in the United States and Europe shares some similar interests with other contemporary art movements: nature art, minimal art, individual mythology, and securing of evidence. What distinguishes and unites land art is the materials used (earth, stone, wood, snow, ice), certain archetypal forms (line, circle, pyramid), and the types of landscapes engaged (desert, forest, agricultural, industrial, and urban). Inherent in these elements are powerful historical and mythological meanings, as exemplified by the works of Walter de Maria, Michael Heizer, Richard Long, Andy Goldsworthy, and Robert Morris, among others.

Weilacher is clearly building a case for the importance of land art. It is the author's contention that landscape architecture's response to the ecological crisis has been one of functional and technological concerns, while land art has been developing a new language of landscape. For landscape architects, three features of land art are of particular significance. One is the concentration on the essential and the expressive simplicity of the work. Another is the transience of most land art which incorporates the process of metamorphosis. And finally is the romantic component,