

NATURE, DESIGN, AND HEALTH

EXPLORATIONS OF A LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT

DAVID KAMP



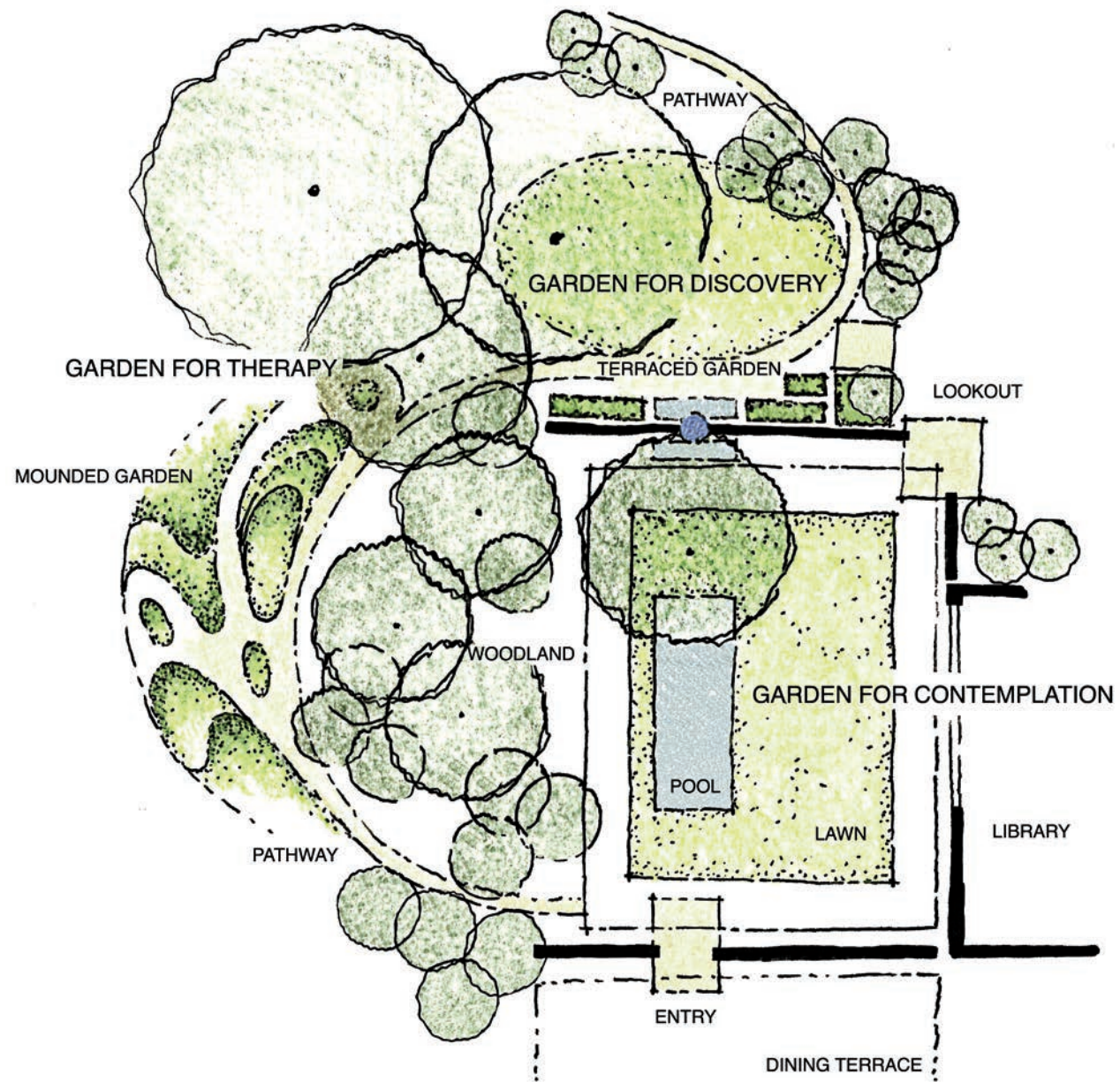
View from pavilion, Schnaper Garden. Photo by Bruce Buck.

can come and go unobtrusively, without entering the rest of the garden. This space, with benches and rocking chairs, quickly became the preferred hang-out for patients and a favorite destination for visiting families. In response to staff mentioning the difficulty they faced keeping visiting children occupied, I painted a grid on the paving under the pavilion, creating a series of blank canvases for children's chalk drawings. Everyone benefited from watching young artists engrossed in drawing.

The garden's large honey locust tree taught me something about space, exposure, and privacy. Anchoring the area between two pavilions and the path of leaves, the tree's dappled shade made the transition from shade to sun comfortable for patients sensitive to changes in exposure. One day, I watched as a patient in a wheelchair found a shady spot, only to roll into the sun after a few minutes and then roll back out again a bit later. Pulling a chair over to



View from shade structure, Schnaper Garden. Photo by Bruce Buck.



CONCEPT PLAN

Concept plan, Evans Restorative Garden, Cleveland Botanical Garden.



Discovery Wall design study, Evans Restorative Garden.

Not every question was easily answered, nor every problem quickly resolved, but we developed a methodology for problem solving based on a mutual respect and a shared goal.

During regular trips to the site, I met with user groups, such as the visually impaired, to see how we might refine the design to better engage those with specific needs. I also met with contractors to address decisions that always come up during construction. On one visit, inspecting the foundation for the large stone wall with Jeff Catts, my heart sank at seeing how close the excavation came to Nona's magnolia. Roots blocking construction required on-the-spot design changes. This garden, built among mature trees, brought many more tough choices, tense moments, and the need for immediate decisions, eased by the collective sense of cooperation that infused the entire team.

Soon everyone on the jobsite knew what I meant by "invisible details." The stonemasons became enthusiastic collaborators, accommodating our desire to place special stones throughout the wall and reworking sections multiple times once they understood the therapeutic goals. One day a stonemason handed me a handsome rock with several exposed veins of quartz and asked, "Could you find a home for this? I have been holding onto it for just the right job." You bet we could. On another visit, as the garden neared completion, I confirmed an observation made during the charrette: the need for a screen wall along the dining terrace. To handle this issue without completely blocking the view, I added an unexpected feature. The new stone wall separating our garden from the busy dining terrace included a window, carefully configured so those standing or sitting in a wheelchair would have a glimpse of the new garden and a visual invitation to explore.

Soaring canopies in the adjacent woodland extend over lush understory



Landscape Commons, SHAPE education campus. Photo by Simon Menges.

another example of how formative experiences influence future work, not to mention the importance of studying architectural history.

The northern end of the campus is anchored by the campus gymnasium, flanked by the US elementary and middle schools. The two schools and gymnasium wrap around the northern end of the Landscape Commons. Used for active play, such as basketball, it is also the school's main event space for special occasions such as opening day and graduation. To us it seemed the heart of the campus, and I began exploring ways to link it to the host nation, Belgium. I developed a pattern of arcs and lines in the paving that allude to Gerardus Mercator, the German-Belgian cartographer who developed the mapping pro-



Elementary school playground, SHAPE education campus. Photo by Simon Menges.

jection system that transformed maritime navigation in the sixteenth century. Between playful arcs of resilient paving and basketball hoops was a nod to a concept that would unite the world.

The SHAPE project showed me how different perspectives could come together to express a common vision. (For example, in contrast to the UK's mandate, Germany wanted "no dirt" in their playgrounds.) Despite cultural differences, the idea of a shared green space where every child was welcome resonated across the member nations. A project of this magnitude and complexity comes with a dense bureaucracy and seemingly endless approval process, as well as stringent security requirements and tricky construction coordination.



Water wall, Sensory Arts Garden. Photo by Dirtworks, PC.



A “place away” with pebble seats, Sensory Arts Garden. Photo by Robin Hill.

seemingly whimsical feature by designer, consultant, and contractor continues to inspire me.

Joined by a teacher and therapist, we talked about other collaborative details, such as the small, movable musical sculptures located throughout the garden. Staff enjoyed positioning the instruments in various locations to encourage cooperative exchanges or support an individual’s creative explorations. On an earlier visit, I had watched two nonverbal boys approach metal chimes located across from each other in a raised planter. A simple, tentative exchange blossomed into a rich melodic pattern flowing back and forth between the two. I will hold the memory of that “conversation” forever.

There are other special places, such as the learning circle: a concrete table shaped like a tree trunk and stump-shaped seats, enclosed within an encircling paving band. Also based on Marlene’s hula-hoop idea, this visual boundary provides structure, giving a student and teacher greater focus, richer engage-