

Doctoral School of Hungarian University of Fine Arts

**BOUNDARY OF A CROFT**  
navigations in the garden

synopsis of DLA discourse

Zsolt Ferenczy

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Consultant: Zoltán Tölg-Molnár DLA habil  
painter, university professor

## SYNOPSIS

In the course of DLA programme of the Hungarian University of Fine Arts and subsequently my creative and researching work referred to two fields. On one hand the phenomenon of transformation and taking possession of nature or rather environment. On the other hand my work referred to making experiments of manifestation and extension of private space. In my thesis I study this theme which is based on the *garden* that is also the most offering art metaphor. The *boundary of an allotment* -- that is the title of my thesis -- is my own space for living. This indicates that the house and the garden are enclosure also referring to every allotment (*hortus conclusus*). *Navigation* means orientation, determination, the aimed glance as well as discovery and a referring point of an individual creative method at the same time.

*On one hand the gardens are particular living works (representations) including dimensions of time and space. On the other hand they are pictures of nostalgia (reconstructions of remembrance) and utopia (constructions of desire).*

The *garden* is ultimately a fenced in, cut out and rebuilt part of nature (that is originally chaotic and wild). The man cultivates and protects this part in his own culture (so to say he makes it anthropomorphic). That's why the garden can be interpreted as a place where nature and culture unite.

Gardens are living materials of cultural samples and areas that help people with surviving. The reason for their existence is the desire for harmony. This is a type of reconstruction of Paradise, a call for a wished world and it is a guarantee for surviving (as the source of our food).

Gardens are inexhaustible sources because they are real and metaphorical. Gardens are such favoured places and specially furnished spaces that do not take their final forms, they are never done. So watching a garden is like a frame which refers to the antecedents and the following periods of a particular state. The painted landscapes open the gates of past and present exactly with this restriction (and framing) and the dimensions of extension before the spectator of the land. The garden as a living work of art, however, overcomes the time by reckoning that it goes by.

The most popular form of closed gardens is the allotment that usually consists of a house with a garden. The allotment as a closed place (a part of space) is the basic element of settlement. The *boundary of an allotment* is usually a building site which is closed from its environment by a marking or a formation. The boundary of an allotment is a boundary of the ownership that is a conclusion of measurements and it closes a space in a particular proportion. It is a sort of boundary line that is marked at first by stones or piles. Later when it is built in the boundary line is closed from its environment with fence, wall and plants or with the building itself. The *fence* covers, protects, defines and gives a frame and right but it has to fit in with the neighbouring allotments. The fence is a frame of understanding as well that cuts out a real and defined sized field of acting for the owner.

*Home* as a private space (a domesticated and furnished space) is a narrative phenomenon that bears the marks of expansion of the individuality. The house and the garden belonging to it can be interpreted as a basic symbol of a dialogue with nature since it is a material with inextricable patterns of artificial and natural.

In the allotments -- that are calling Paradise -- geometrical conceptions became general from the Middle Ages to Baroque. These conceptions were the symbols of the principles of mathematics, cosmic and the hierarchical system of state and world. In the first half of the eighteenth century the landscape garden came into existence as the resolution of rebellion against the style. Since the new style was born in England it is also called *English garden*. A new type of gardening came into existence by the opening of gardens and by their connecting to nature. The landscape of gardens endeavoured to abolish the real boundaries between garden and landscape. As a work of art it endeavoured to be a compressed and increased copy of created world as the symbol of a new utopia and order. It is the manifestation of an imagined liberal Paradise. There are some layers of time in the landscape garden. These layers are: mythical time, historical time and present time. These times fuse into each other and they are mirrored in each other continuously.

Claude Lorrain's ideal landscapes were really popular in England of that time. The painter, who praised arcadian and the light of South, was taken as an example when picturesque gardens were created. Nature appearing in landscape gardens is rather the nature mirrored in poetry, painting and history. This picture of nature needed a comprehensive education of the spectator to receive.

The birth of landscape and its coming off the myths is a modern phenomenon and it can be related to the concept of aestheticism. Motives and landmarks placed in the land give the distance. The colour creates the experience of space and it uses the influence of tonalities and exposure. In the English vocabulary the word *landschap* came from the Netherlands and it was used for a term of painting round 1600 when the Dutch artists started to become famous as masters of landscape painting. At that time landscape was a picture painted of a land and only some decades later it referred to the land itself as a natural sight. The general definition says that landscape is a part of a land that glance is able to look over at once. This definition determines a frame of course. We can reckon that it is similar to Japanese gardens where the concept of framing is an important point of view. In the rooms of the buildings in the garden the frame of sight can be ductiled with the help of the movable walls depending on whether we want to watch a whole picture or just a part of it. The geometrically distanced space helps its graphic character and it makes the space similar to a painting or an engraving. This type of framing can be observed at the *sakkei* namely the "borrowed land" technique as well. "Looking over" the land outside the garden provides the background of the picture of the garden in this way.

Landscape gardening is a type of art of gardening that includes classicism and romanticism. It represented the change of idea about nature for more than a century. Landscape gardening played a significant role in fusing the thoughts of art of gardening and architectural art. (Among the contemporary artists of gardening maybe Ian Hamilton Finlay's private garden relates to the classical English landscape garden most purely.) It marks the beginning of an era that the improvement of this style led from the private idyll of the enlightened aristocracy to the public parks.

Today's formation and organization of gardens and landscapes, the town planning, the environment and environmental protection are opposed to economic and political systems and strategies continuously because they have absolutely different interests. Unfortunately, the critical situation of our environment is not disputable. It is a universal fact and factor. The concept of global garden comes from the globalism. Eco-art is connected to the new paradigms of course. Representatives of these paradigms (for example, Joseph Beuys, Agnes Denes, Louis G. Le Roy, Herman de Vries, Hans Haacke) abandon the alienated techniques of traditional and modern mediums and they emphasize the direct, immediate and caring connection with nature instead. It is against to drastic formation of soil and landscape (for example, Smithson's spiral or Christo's

industrial interventions in a landscape). The holistic view of nature is generally typical of artists who take steps against exploitation of nature.

We can look on the *countries* as allotments which are systems of woods, fields, ploughlands, rivers, lakes and peoples. The *garden countries* are separated from each other with boundary lines. In the countries there are more boundary lines: agricultural areas, industrial parks, land systems of towns and villages, allotments and public gardens etc. It is a structured spatial net, social space and field of power. Particular cultures put drastic boundaries around themselves. Such boundaries were the Great Wall of China, the Wall of Berlin or the Iron Curtain itself. The compulsions and needs of building walls exist today in a similar way.

Particular civilizations occupy and rearrange cardinal points because they are expanding. Colonies are rearranged, ordered, deprived of their centre and stolen cardinal points. The colonizers think they are predestined to expand in all directions from the origin (from the mother-country) just because they monopolized the centre. Colonies had not had a centre anymore and they were devalued to cardinal points. They became outlying exotic areas. Foucault says that the colonies are extreme manifestations of differently structured places and that the ship is a place without being a real place which goes to the colonials to explore their most valuable gardens and treasures. So ship is one of the most important things of our civilization and also it is the most abundant treasury of imagination, par excellence heterotropy, says Foucault and he concludes: "In civilizations dreams cease flowing without ships adventure is followed by spying and we bump into policemen at most instead of pirates."<sup>1</sup>

What are happiness (that is connected to childhood automatically) and wishing to get away made up of? Can a utopia (that is an illusion that uses private motives but also cliches) be caused artificially from the sets of memory traces and desire? Can a private utopia (which can also be general) be represented as a painted picture?

Painting seems that it has found its position. It realized that it is not over and it can be active and exciting (even if it is not revolutionary and it is not necessarily to the general public) despite its old age. Today everything is allowed and maybe it is fine. The domain of the interpretation of today's painting is the painting itself of course in other word the pictures that have been painted

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Foucault: *Language to the Infinity, Difference of Spaces*, Latin Betűk, Debrecen, 1999, pg. 147-155.

so far. The future of painting is the pictures that have not been painted yet. So painting has future till painters exist and paint. That is simple. Is that such simple?

In today's kaleidoscope-like state navigation is even more difficult. Realist and symbolist ways get on well with features of avantgard (like abstract, formalist, conceptualist or even anti-artistic). In the realist (illusionist) tendencies there is not any new but it can be exciting and relevant as well. Painting is exciting maybe because we cannot really approach it as a hotbed of innovations. Painting derives from itself. Painting is tautologic.

We live in confused spaces of utopias. Gardens and landscapes are utopias in frames. They are nostalgias, desires and reconstructions. Painters are discoverers, continuously navigating gardeners.

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