

“I leave to the various futures,
my garden of Forking Paths.”

— Jorge Luis Borges

THE GARDEN OF FORKING PATHS

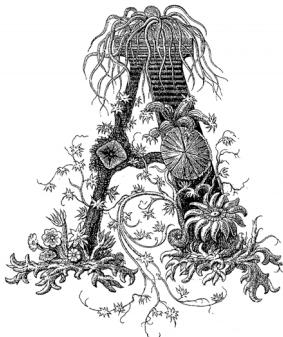
If you are interested in further information or in joining the Society of the Garden of Forking Paths please kindly write to: society@forkingpaths.org

or contact: Marina McDougall, Director
The Garden of Forking Paths
156 Noe Street, San Francisco, CA 94114
marina@forkingpaths.org

COVER: "Head of a Canal or Termination of a Vista" from Paul Decker's *Chinese Architecture, Civil and Ornamental*

THE BAUM FOUNDATION, a public charity dedicated to art, education and the environment, is the non-profit fiscal sponsor of THE GARDEN OF FORKING PATHS.

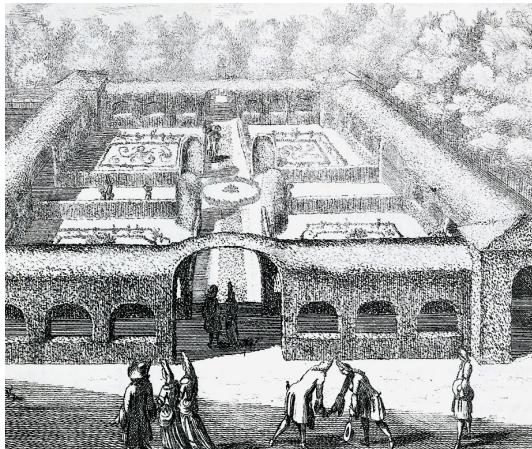
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garden is a site of imagination. A fusion of natural creation and human artifice—gardens are the setting where we project our idealized notions of nature. From Cyrus the Great's walled paradise garden of Mesopotamia to Ian Hamilton Finley's symbolic arcadia in contemporary Scotland, gardens reflect our complex and shifting relationship to the natural world.

ABOVE: Illustration by eminent German biologist, naturalist, philosopher, physician, professor and artist Ernst Haeckel

RIGHT: Het Loo in the Netherlands
a hybrid of Renaissance and Baroque influences

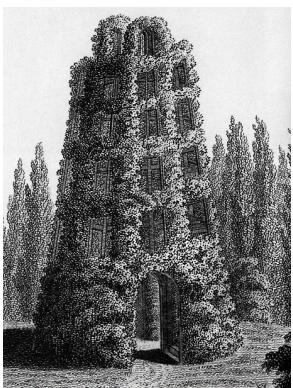


VISION



ABOVE: A rustic gazebo observatory from French Victor Petit's 1850 illustrations

BETWEEN: A trelliswork pergola in the form of a tower from a German pattern book of 1799

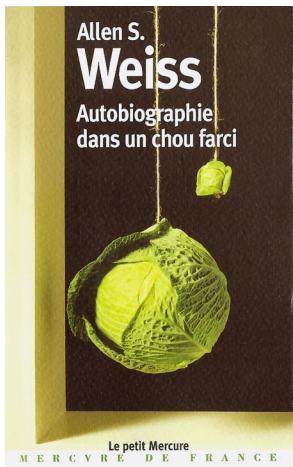


The Garden of Forking Paths is a vision for a garden about gardens—a contemporary pleasure garden—that re-interprets historical gardens and experiments with new garden forms. Slowly unfolding as a succession of outdoor rooms, *Forking Paths* will lead its visitors down a series of both literal and allegorical branching paths. The overall garden layout will mirror the evolution of the garden in the West by transporting the visitor from formal to more naturalistic garden environments. Along the way *Forking Paths* will take unexpected and curious turns with corresponding aesthetic, philosophical, and psychological journeys. In the sub-gardens of *Forking Paths*, the visitor might experience:

- the recreation of an early Persian pleasure garden
- the theatrics of a 17th century forced-perspective garden
- a tasting orchard describing the history of the apple tree
- the “wild” reaches of a meadow of native plantings
- or the fantastic nature of a garden featuring an extraordinary tree house

The Garden of Forking Paths will use the rich medium of the garden to create new forms of gardens—environments that provoke dialogue about what we understand nature to be.

PROGRAMS AND DEVELOPMENT



ABOVE: French translation of Allen Weiss' essay *Autobiography of a Stuffed Cabbage* presented to the Society of the Garden of Forking Paths in 2006

BETWEEN: 16th century garden Villa Lante in Bagnaia, one of the most famous Renaissance mannerist gardens of surprises

We are currently in the planning phase of what we hope will become an important future institution in the San Francisco Bay Area. This current stage involves:

- creating prototypes of garden environments in collaboration with cultural institutions
- presenting *The Garden of Forking Paths* garden salon series
- researching historic and contemporary gardens through international garden expeditions
- investigating locations for a permanent garden

The long-term plan is to acquire an appropriate tract of land within nearby reach of the San Francisco Bay Area. Here an interdisciplinary *Forking Paths* team will develop the garden in a process of phased development in collaboration with landscape architects, garden historians, artists, ecologists, and other special guests.

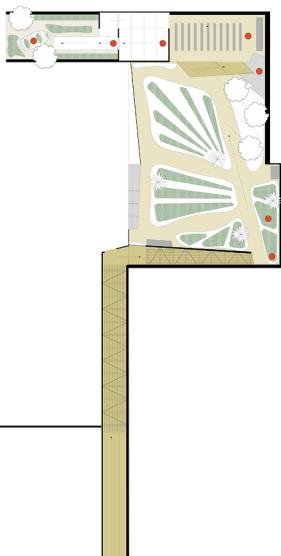


MACHINE IN THE GARDEN



ABOVE: Forklifting a three ton rock
into the garden

BELOW: Design layout of
Machine in the Garden illustrated
by Richard Johnson



The Garden of Forking Paths is currently developing a permanent outdoor installation called *Machine in the Garden: A Pastoral* on the campus of The Oxbow School in Napa, California. Located at the bow of the Napa River, Oxbow is a unique interdisciplinary art program for secondary school students from across the U.S.

Inspired by Leo Marx's influential book on American pastoral literature, *Machine in the Garden* provides a physical framework for reflecting upon a philosophical and ideological conflict that has profoundly shaped the history of the American landscape and how we see it – the tension between an industrialized landscape and a bucolic, arcadian countryside. As a sculptural landscape *Machine in the Garden* will contain the narrative elements of the pastoral genre – idyll, rupture, and resolve – and provoke visitors to consider their relationship with nature in new ways.

To reach the garden the visitor walks down a long twisting pathway – through a row of almond trees, under pergolas of wild rose and grape, and through two swinging gates.

Here they arrive upon a slightly miniaturized field of grasses, pear trees, and furrowed beds rising amidst fieldstones. The space is rustic and bucolic with elements of orchard and pasture suggesting the naturalistic as well as the tended – an idyllic spot for daydreaming.



As the visitor rounds a corner they come upon a train's cattle guard emerging out of the ground, a mechanical intrusion that breaks the visitor's reverie. An emblem of industry and man's control over nature, the machine calls for an awakening from the transcendent, escapist experience of nature.

Next, a series of railroad ties leads towards a folly – a structure replicating a rustic shed. Facing out of the garden towards the river, the shed opens onto a dock. In the distance a row-boat is moored in tall reeds. Through a lens mounted in the darkened shed, the Napa River is brought into the garden as picturesque scenery framed by weeping trees.

For Oxbow students the garden's meanings will come to life as they study Thoreau, Twain or the Hudson River School in literature and history courses. They will till its fields, pluck its pears and seek its shade for quiet contemplation. For the public, the garden will illuminate the relationship between the country and the city and generate curiosity and dialogue about the history, culture, and nature of the American landscape.

The garden is currently under construction and is planned to open in Fall 2008.

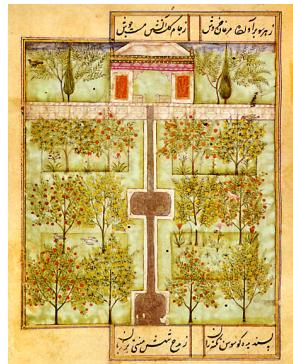
ABOVE: Views of
Machine in the Garden scale model

THE GARDEN OF FORKING PATHS

THE GARDEN'S NAME

Conceived as a “meta-garden,” a garden about gardens, Forking Paths derives its name from a story summarized here by Allen S. Weiss in his book *Mirrors of Infinity*: “Jorge Luis Borges’s story The Garden of Forking Paths is the tale of the great grandson of Ts’ui Pen, the Chinese governor of Yunnan, who renounced his political office to devote himself to writing a novel of inestimable complexity, and to creating “the garden of forking paths,” a labyrinth so intricate that all who enter would be lost within. Centuries later, no trace of the labyrinth exists, and what remains of the novel is deemed totally incoherent. Yet his great grandson finally unravels the mystery: Ts’ui Pen’s book and his labyrinth are one—a labyrinth of symbols. The meaning of this labyrinth of labyrinths is time itself.

The very incoherence of his novel is due, paradoxically, to its adequacy as an image of the universe; time, permitting every possibility, demands a narrative where every option is maintained, and where no single plot determines the course of events. For time is the possibility of possibilities.”



TOP: Persian miniature depicting a paradise garden

ABOVE: English and French hedge mazes represented infinity and were outdoor theaters of intrigue and romance with their tall shrubs shielding amorous couples from view

LEFT: Early Edo period garden Manshu-in in Kyoto, Japan