



**Gardens of Senses. The Spanish Gardens of Javier Mariátegui**

With texts by Javier Mariátegui Valdés and photographs by Javier Mariátegui Valdés, Casilda Mariátegui and Mark Bentley. 188 pp. with 245 illus., 305 x 259 mm, hard-cover, English  
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It was not by chance nor by a trick of fate that Javier Mariátegui dedicated himself to gardening. He grew up among gardens.

Both his grandmothers were gardening enthusiasts, one of them, the Marchioness of Casa Valdés, wrote the book *Spanish Gardens*, which describes the history of Spanish gardening from Roman times to the present day. This book continues to be a reference for all lovers of this particular field of history and art.

This enthusiasm was passed on to him by his parents. From his earliest years he was making his own gardens, by reusing those plants discarded by his father.

Mariátegui studied landscape gardening and design at the Escuela de Paisajismo y Jardinería Castillo de Batres in Madrid. Subsequently he worked in England as a gardener. Back in Spain, he established the Jardines de España nursery, which looks after and employs handicapped children, with whom he first started making gardens. For the past thirty years, he has created numerous gardens across Spain and in several other European countries. He has also published many articles on landscape-gardening topics in specialized magazines and a book on one of his gardens: *El Jardín de los Tapices / The Tapestry Garden*. Among the present garden architects of Spain Mariátegui plays an outstanding role. Even the Spanish TV has dedicated a monographic program to him and his gardens.

It would be difficult to summarize in a few words the essence of Mariátegui's gardens, given the wide variety of styles, their versatility and numerous differences that perhaps becomes his »signature«. His style is not dogmatic, he loves order and disorder, straight lines and curved, the wild chaos of nature as well as strict geometrical patterns, varied and single species of plants, colour and absence of colour. Moreover he enjoys bringing elements that clash together until they harmonize.

Perhaps as a result of an intimate knowledge of the magic of water in Andalusian Moorish gardens, Mariátegui uses water as an essential element in many of his gardens. He makes it »work« in all its forms; in pumps, in cascades, in constant gentle movement, or rocking in waves, in disperse drops or in silence like a mirror that adds the magic of its reflection.

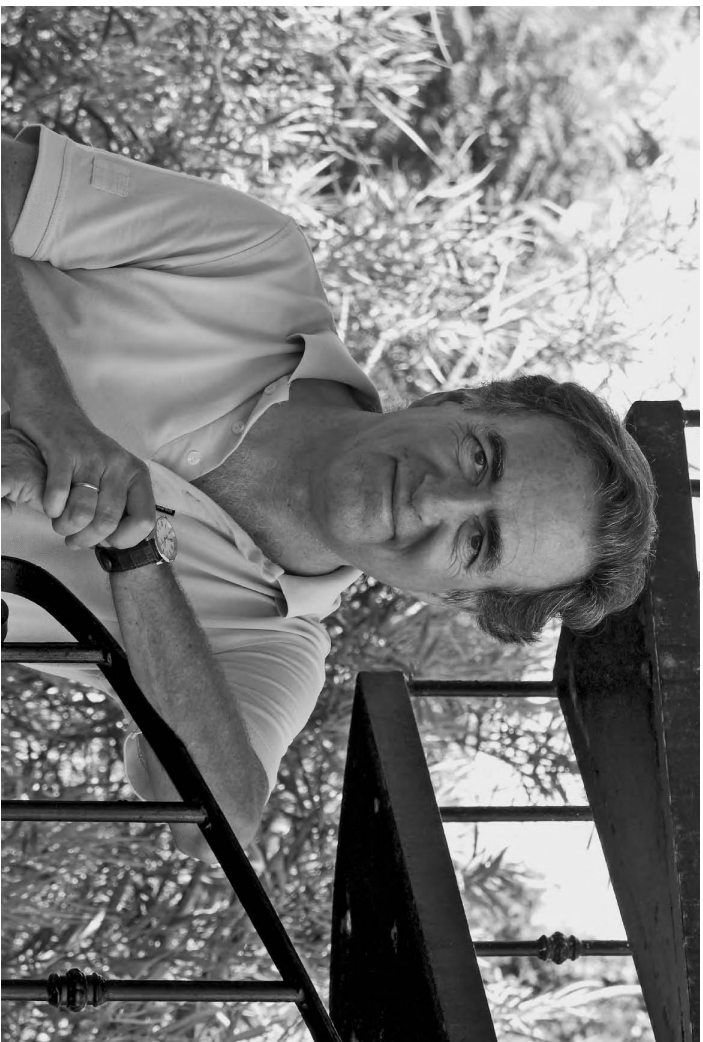
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**Brockhaus Commission**  
**Kreidlerstraße 9**  
**D-70806 Kornwestheim**  
**Germany**  
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## **Gardens for the Senses**

The Spanish Gardens of  
Javier Mariátegui

Edition Axel Menges

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**Dedicated to**

**my mother**

origin and inspiration

**Guillermo and Ana**

patrons and co-conceivers

of dreams

**Angel Gil**

a loyal friend

**Juan Luis Lubano**

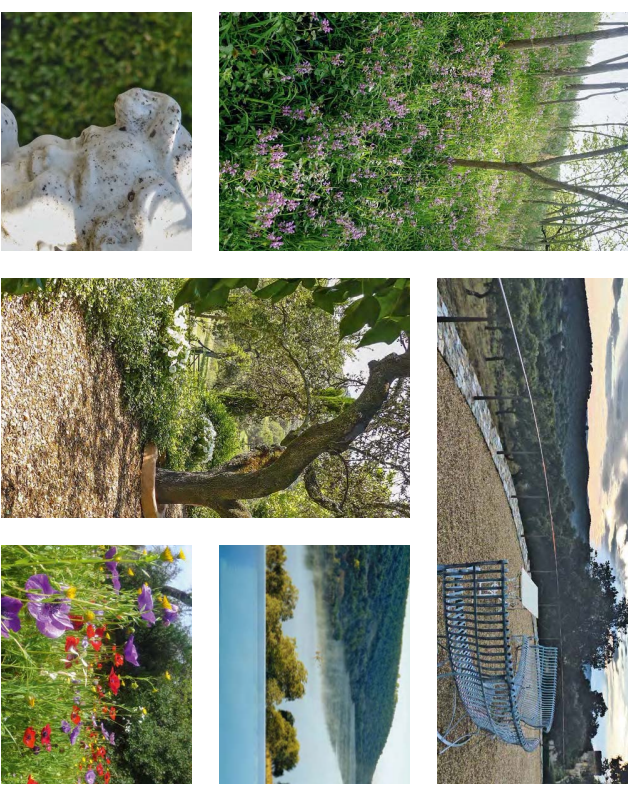
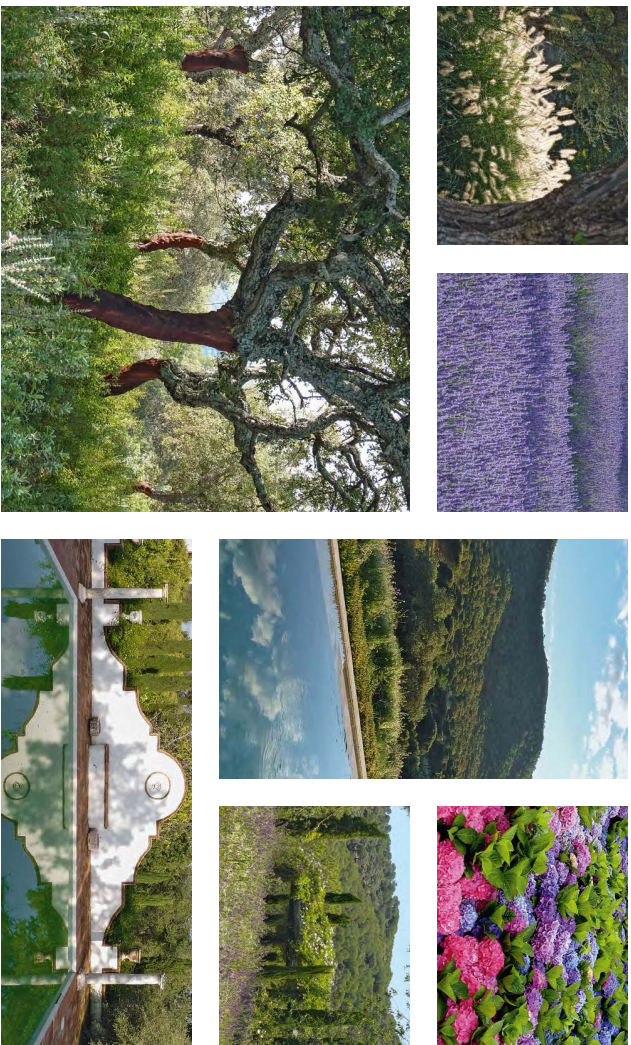
an indispensable source

of inspiration

**and all those whose efforts**

**helped to create**

**each of the gardens**



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## ... Just gardens

Light, the meadows murmur of water, views, scents, the bending of modern and classical, order, dramatic effects, the impact of a single visit, reflections on water, and its subtle motion, nature and order intermingled, the flowers of my childhood – all of these have formed the guidelines of my garden designs, of which, here, I present a small sample.

In each of them, I have sought to add to the landscape by the way in which I have related to my perception of what the genius loci, the spirit of the place, called for. These gardens are the designs created from such ingredients.

Led by passion and by a willingness to always try something new for each of them, I have often walked through paths in the dark, whose destination I could not initially ascertain. After an initial fear, results always came as a surprise – as though in a poem, things appeared that I had not realised were there.

I am lucky to have had clients who taught me to see gardens from a different perspective, who guided me along the way, who knew what they wanted but who could not describe it. The final garden could be a solution, and their garden – my garden – became the outcome of almost intervening ideas and people: owners, interior decorators, contractors, friends in the gardening community, office colleagues and, at the end of the line, I, the gardener, drawing from here and there to achieve something in harmony with the landscape.

Most of these gardens are in the countryside, set within sweeping, overwrought landscapes, where the garden should be the frame that will attach value to such a display.

I just added the frame, ... for my idea was that these should not be 'signature' gardens, but gardens perfectly tailored to that place.

I feel obliged to thank all of those who have enthused me with their gardens, a task so noble and beautiful, a work that has made both them and me a little bit celebrant, for the spaces we have created carry a part of our soul, they are the hidden prayer flags, the prayer wheels, the prayers, and wishes, when chased by the wind, thrust their musings and their prayers into the universe, spreading from cloud to cloud, from wave to wave to the ends of the earth.

I have had the great fortune of never being absolutely certain about anything, which has forced me to ask for countless opinions, feelings and impressions on each garden and its details. Thus, from the first sketches to the final plans the evolution has been tremendous.

Each and every one of these gardens has its own soul, but they do share some common traits: each has been sketched, designed and built in a spirit of freedom. It is just the spaces that has colonized the whole garden, endowing it with impressive force.

These are gardens that are easy to maintain, and where, throughout the seasons, a 'green architect' repairs, a backbone shining through the partitions. In each of them I have sought to create clear, individual sensations. As a consequence, the plants have almost always been modified when translated to the site, really has moved itself on the landscape. More than that, really has made the plan simpler, and removing

things has revealed a force and intensity that was being concealed by an excess of plants. I have knocked down stone walls, changed the course of streams, modified the landscape in the 19th century fashion, I have done one thing and the opposite at the landscape's behest – gardens with curves only, and with straight lines, and with a combination of both. Do not believe that I am a designer, I am a gardener, and that is what I find each garden to be like writing a book, something important that we do in our lives. Each one must, therefore, be unique, achieving its own dignity and subtle grandeur regardless of its size.

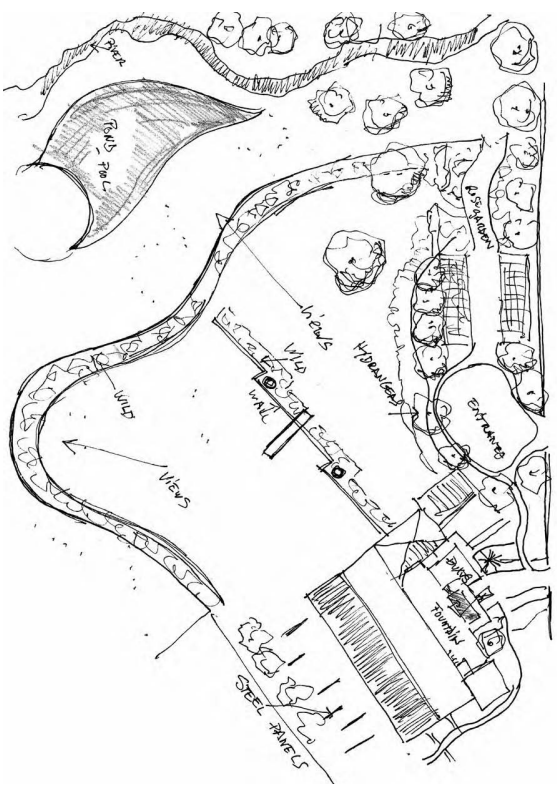
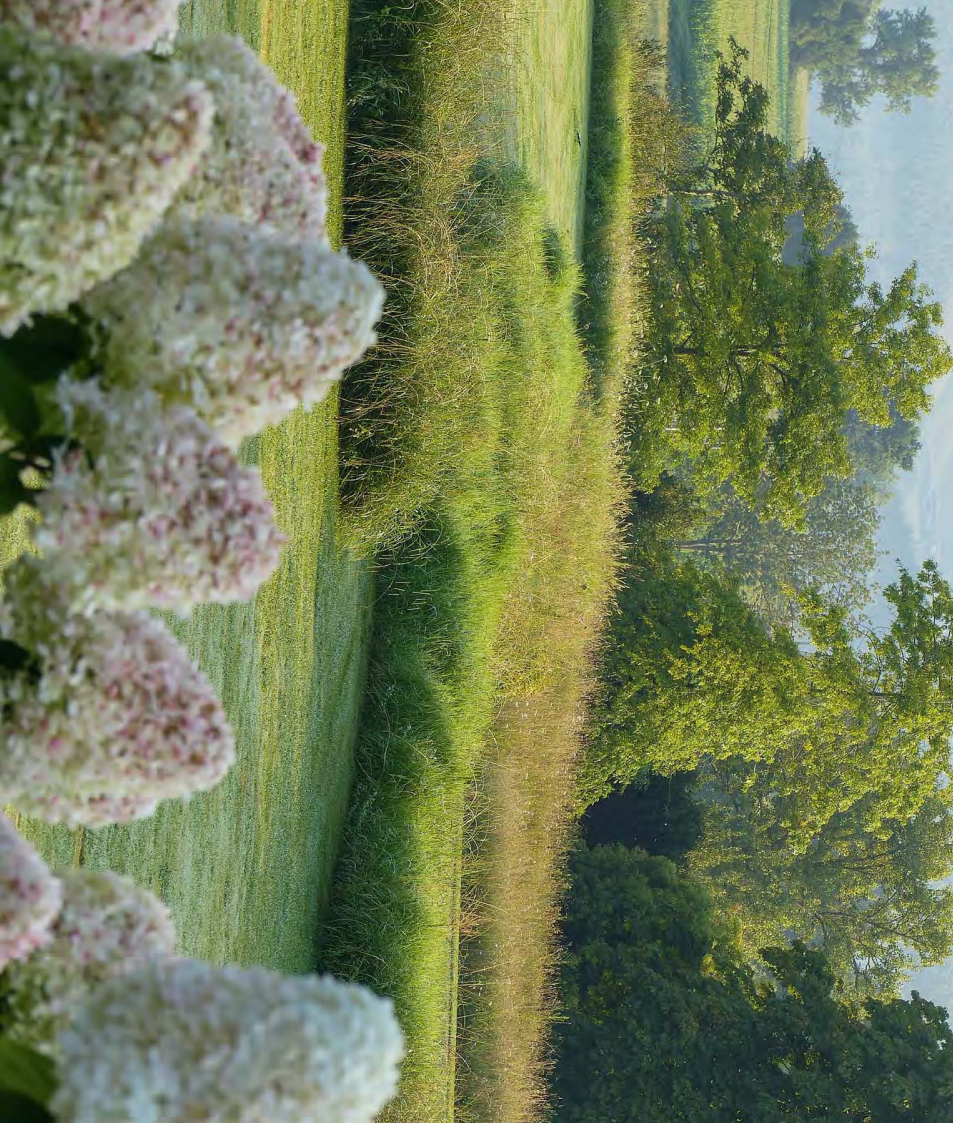
I do not think that my solution for a garden is necessarily better than the next. It is, however, my best solution, I admire many landscape architects – and amateurs, self-taught garden designers – who make me see things that I otherwise would not.

All in all, it is diversity that I find most interesting: some-city gardens or gardens clearly for the spring and autumn, depending on the time of the year, more beds and herbs that enjoy the sun, the shade, the wind, the rain. Some seek the sound and presence of water, others scents, or the colours of the seasons, or the architecture of greenery, some become transparent, while others have a pervasive presence, some have arcant origins, and some are brand new.

Above all, they are gardens ... Just gardens.



**Lines in the forest**



**Lines in the forest**

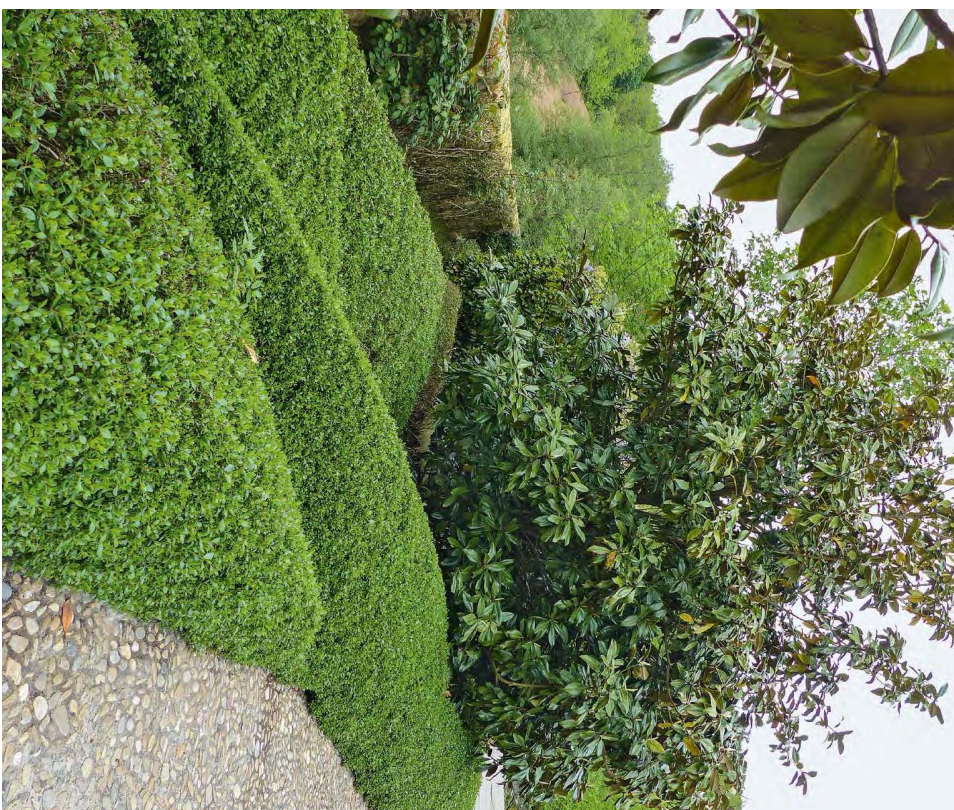
When I first arrived in the garden, it was full of walls: a space closed unto itself, devoid of views, with houses towering over it. However, the hillsides, the river and the meadow landscape invited soft, curving lines. I can still recall the first sketches where the hillside was turned into an array of water-filled terraces, each leading into the next, bending with the sea in the distance. In the end, I made only one large terrace on two levels surrounding the house. The array of water streets became dry, one, following the back with a marked, zigzag, or herring-bone track.

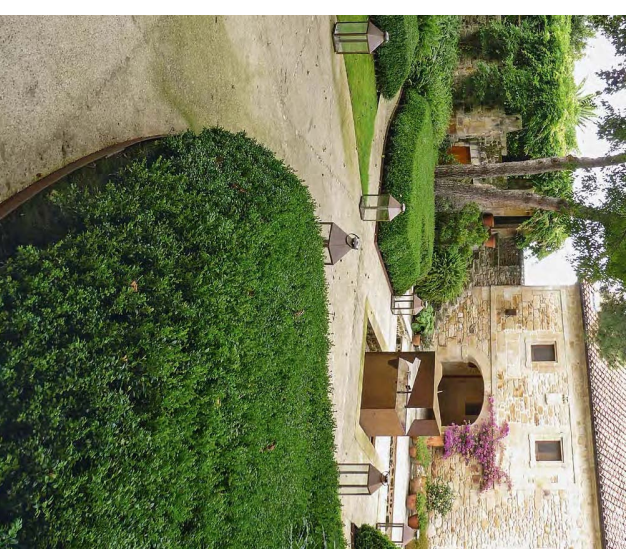
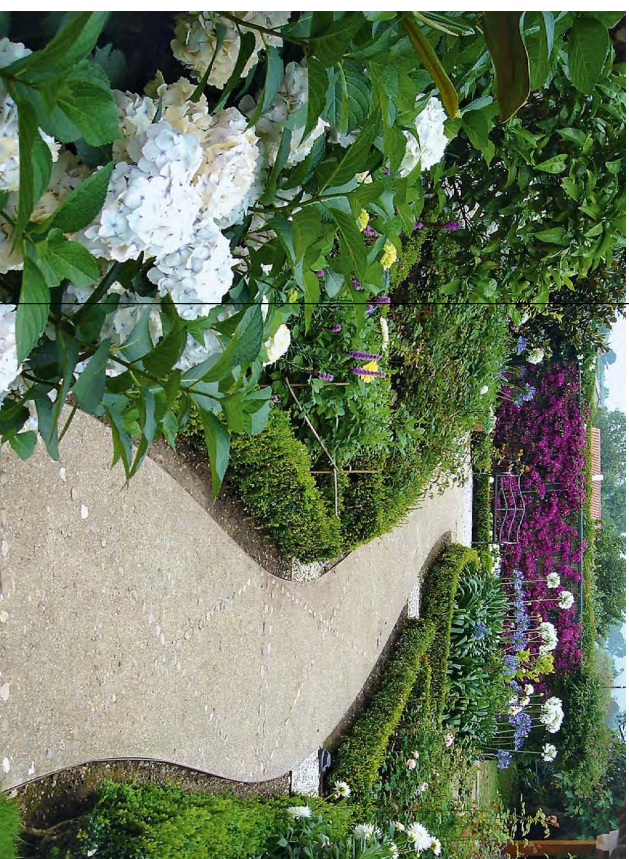
The hillside and houses, the entrance, the river, the meadow, the garden, the terrace, the other house, a series of green hills that opens up as though an entrance hall, while still crossing the rest of the house. An orchard which eventually became a space and lower garden, and the underlying grounds with wild meadows. The north-easterlies batter the garden once or twice a year, leaving the orange trees burnt and leafless and bringing down larger trees, yet each time it comes with courage, eager to burst out in spring.

Like others in this book, the garden is many people's labour of love. Its owners were the architect and diving lover behind everything, and we defined each and every detail, while the interior designer was always being us one step further. The contractor turned us into good gardeners who process drawings... and I stood by the end, drawing and learning from all of them.

A diet cooked by many hands, where each added their ingredient.





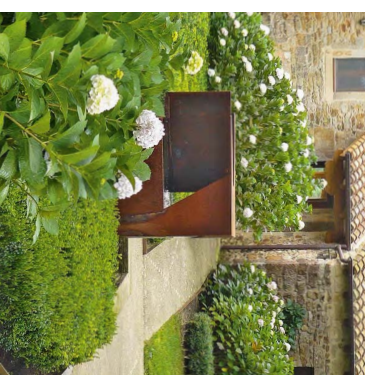


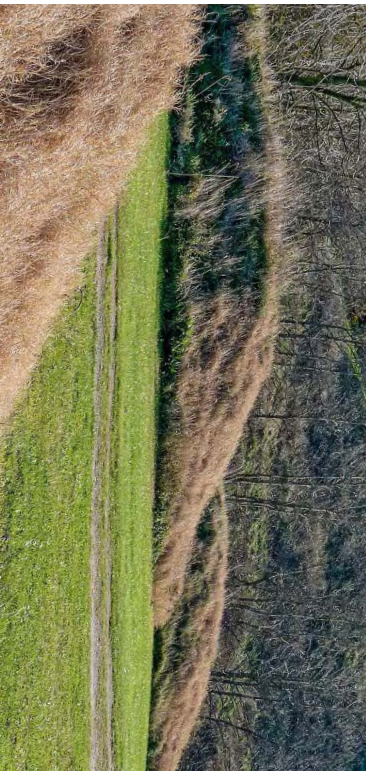
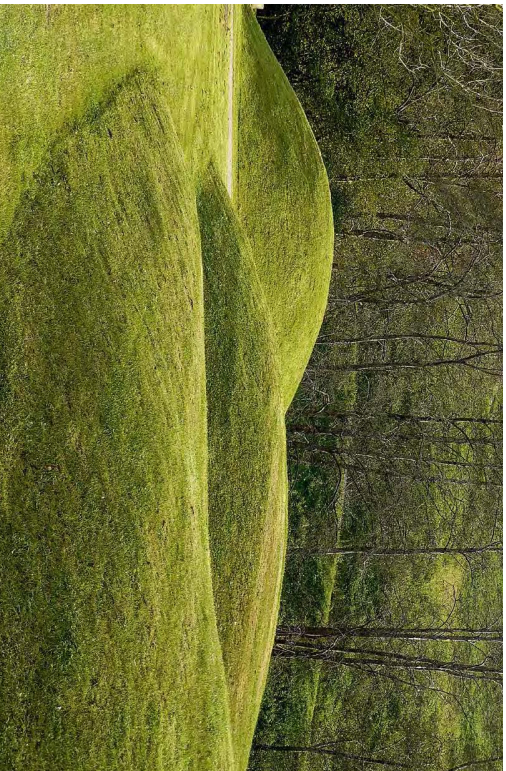
Previous pages: waves of escallonia and magnolia trees.

In the entrance court, the softly undulating contours of the patches of boxwood and hydrangeas form a highly structured green architecture, while enveloping a modern fountain – the source of a cascade of sheets of water.



Water is discovered as one advances through the garden. It appears and disappears, as though a natural spring. An evergreen structure of boxwood, ferns and hydrangeas is its companion throughout the seasons.





Architecture and nature are fused into each other. The undulating terrain allows for the interplay of volumes and shapes, of light and shade, to offer varying perspectives of the garden - to create sculptural features that change throughout the year.

