Title
Going Somewhere? [Transforming the American Garden: 12 New Landscape Designs-Exhibitor]

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“Burial in a sacred grave is an ancient privilege.”
Paul Shepard

Oh, don’t talk to me about gardens and spa-
tial poetics, it’s recheche de temps and paradise.
The only paradise, as Richard Elman says, is
the one that has been lost. Who do you know
who has made it all the way to Within a Bud-
ding Grove?

Where I grew up we had the “Old Back Road.”
You got to The Road (a foreign-country-in-the
suburbs complete with abandoned farmhouse,
snakes and an occa-
sional drifter sleeping
off a drunk) by traverse-
ing a hundred yards of
terrifying and exhi-
bating forest. Who can
say if any Road adven-
ture has been manifest
in my work, but I some-
times wonder if my can
of buried secrets ever
became some other kid’s
miraculous discovery.

A friend who lives in a
Korean Buddhist mon-
esty writes, “There
aren’t any gardens in
America anymore.” And
I think I agree with
him, at least in the
sense of garden-as-par-
dise. It wouldn’t be so
verbalized, but every-
one seems to believe
that they can somehow
must make use of some-
body else’s paradise as
their own.

Yeah, it’s a sign of the
times that most design-
ers don’t perceive the
signs of the times (or
are unable to make use
of this perception if
they do). But since who
is that new? Lacking
vision or insight or
courage, steal somebody
else’s. However, one per-
son’s vision is another’s
vertigo; insight—
insanity; and courage.

But, I’m wrong. Maybe I’m wrong. Maybe design-
ers aren’t as perceptive.
If Baudelaire is right that
what distinguishes so-
called advanced soci-
ties from those of the
past is that they con-
sume images rather
than beliefs, then all
those preserved pillars
are just what the public
ordered.

In our time, this proj-
et—a private cemetery
—flies in the face of this
trend. For what aspect of human experi-
ence is more saturated with notoriety
and blindly-held beliefs
than death? You might
say that this garden
offers the opportunity
to employ one’s beliefs
or to have their advance
exposed.

You’ll want to know that
Valmanaka’s Oedipus was
researched and that the
labyrinth is of Pima ori-
gins. Sure, at one time or
another we’ve all cre-
eted the artist’s secret
code. But don’t expect
intentions to compromise
your response? Perhaps
we need to decide if
Durham was right when
he said that the
most important thing
about a painting is its
title.

The cubes are clipped
horsechestnuts; the
pavilions trained and
cropped pears.

Steven R. Krog

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