



What Gardens Mean

Stephanie Ross

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Are gardens works of art? What is involved in creating a garden? How are gardens experienced by those who stroll through them?

In *What Gardens Mean*, Stephanie Ross draws on philosophy as well as the histories of art, gardens, culture, and ideas to explore the magical lure of gardens. Paying special attention to the amazing landscape gardens of eighteenth-century England, she situates gardening among the other fine arts, documenting the complex messages gardens can convey and tracing various connections between gardens and the art of painting.

What Gardens Mean offers a distinctive blend of historical and contemporary material, ranging from extensive accounts of famous eighteenth-century gardens to incisive connections with present-day philosophical debates. And while Ross examines aesthetic writings from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, including Joseph Addison's *Spectator* essays on the pleasures of imagination, the book's opening chapter surveys more recent theories about the nature and boundaries of art. She also considers gardens on their own terms, following changes in garden style, analyzing the phenomenal experience of viewing or strolling through a garden, and challenging the claim that the art of gardening is now a dead one.

Showing that an artistic lineage can be traced from gardens in the Age of Satire to current environmental installations, this book is a sophisticated account of the myriad pleasures that gardens offer and a testimony to their enduring sensory and cognitive appeal. Beautifully illustrated and elegantly written, *What Gardens Mean* will delight all those interested in the history of gardens and the aesthetic and philosophical issues that they invite.

"Replete with provocative musings, Ross delineates links that should prove interesting to readers engaged in pondering our capacity to relate to the natural world through the gardens we create."—*Booklist*

"[A]n innovative and absorbing study of the garden as an object of aesthetic interest."—Allen Carlson, *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*

"[P]leasantly readable. . . . A thought-provoking book for all who reflect as they dig."—Noel Kingsbury, *Country Life*

"[A] refreshing view of the subject. . . . Ross's book is continually illuminating in unexpected ways."—Gillian Darley, *Architects' Journal*

"*What Gardens Mean* is a wonderful intellectual combination of discussions on the interdisciplinary histories of art, gardening, and philosophy."—*Choice*

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Pamela Adair:

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Matthew Wallace:

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