

The Museum of Modern Art

1 West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019 Circle 5-8900 Cable: Modernart

May 1964

FACT SHEET ON THE ABBY ALDRICH ROCKEFELLER SCULPTURE GARDEN

Total area is approximately 35,000 square feet; 13,650 square feet newly added.

Garden is now on three levels: the 75' x 100' Upper Terrace approximately 16 feet above the rest of the Sculpture Garden, an intermediate terrace surrounding the central sunken garden, which measures about 140' x 90', is four feet above the lower terrace.

The entire garden is paved with unpolished grey Vermont Marble, as are the stairs leading up to the Terrace; the 18-foot wall at the east end of the lower Garden Wing is also faced with grey marble. The grey brick wall along 54th Street is 220 feet long and 18 feet high; the wall is interspersed with two grill-work gates which open on to 54th Street.

The two pools measure 13' x 48' and 13' x 80', are lined with black lead and are fitted with 90-watt, 12 volt special fountain lighting units.

Special lighting units have been used throughout the Garden and Upper Terrace; there is a row of 8 pole-mounted floumeric light units along the east wall of the Terrace, as well as a 60-foot light pole which lights the stair landing. Eight 750-watt units with hoods will be placed in the roof of the Museum overlooking the Garden. Almost 50 reflector lamps will be used to light the trees on the dining terrace and directly in front of the terrace in the sunken garden area. Another 12 fixtures have been placed in sunken wells in the birch groves between the pools. Forty up-right fixtures have been mounted on racks along the 54th Street wall and will light the north end of the garden.

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Tree: European weeping beeches - 2 new, 5 existing - total 7

European weeping birch (white) - 18

Plane trees - 2 new, 2 existing - total 4

Hornbeam - 8 (all existing)

Lombardy poplars - over 70 (all new)

Ivy is used as underplanting throughout the Garden and on the slopes between the sunken area and the intermediate terrace, pierias--a low-growing broadleaf evergreen plant--has been used in plantings throughout the Garden, and various kinds of seasonal flowers (marigolds, at present) will be planted beneath the birch trees in front of the dining terrace.

Philip C. Johnson, Architect

Zion and Breen, Landscape Architects

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With the re-opening of The Museum of Modern Art on May 27, more than 13,500 square feet--an increase of more than one-third the previous space--will have been added to the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Sculpture Garden, designed by Philip C. Johnson, the architect in charge of the Museum's current building program.

The expansion of the Garden, a long-time oasis for New Yorkers and out-of-town visitors to mid-town Manhattan, was accomplished by the construction of an upper terrace atop the new one-story wing at the east end of the Garden which is connected to the lower garden by a broad flight of marble stairs and a 70-foot intermediate terrace.

The new Sculpture Garden covers approximately 35,000 square feet, where sculpture from the Museum's collection is placed in the paved marble court amidst pools, fountains and groves of beech and birch trees. The stairs and the 18-foot wall of the Garden Wing are also faced with the same unpolished, grey Vermont marble that is used in the paving. The 54th Street side of the garden is bounded by an unglazed, gray brick wall, 220 feet long and 18 feet high, with two open grill-work aluminum gates which allow passers-by on 54th Street to look into the Garden and which provide access to the street when required.

The landscaping of the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Sculpture Garden was done by the firm of Zion and Breen, Landscape Architects, who were consultants to Mr. Johnson. The major additions include a row of Lombardy poplars along the Upper Terrace; two groves of European weeping birch planted alongside the pools in the sunken garden, and another grove of birch in front of the dining terrace at the west end of the garden; as well as a row of four plane trees along the 54th Street wall. A single large European weeping beech tree has been planted in the northwest corner of the Upper Terrace and another at the bottom of the stair-wall in the northeast corner of the intermediate terrace. A third new weeping beech has been added to a group of three that had been planted between the two pools several years

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ago. The eight Hornbeam trees planted along the dining terrace in front of the Garden Restaurant remain. The Restaurant will be open daily for luncheon and tea, dinner and light refreshments are served on Thursday evenings when the Museum is open until 9.

At night the Garden is lit by a series of eight floumeric lights along the side of Canada House as well as a 60-foot light pole leading to the Upper Terrace along the outside wall of the 54th Street wing. There will also be floumeric lights as well as reflector lamps placed in the groves and throughout the lower garden area. In addition, the fountain will be lit by specially designed units.

The original plans of the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Sculpture Garden, which was designed by Philip Johnson in 1953, has been retained in the expansion. The Garden, was named in honor of the late Mrs. John D. Rockefeller Jr., one of the original founders of the Museum. The glass-walled Garden Restaurant, with its own outdoor terrace overlooking the sunken garden and planted with Hornbeam trees and flower beds, opened the following year.

With the completion of the second phase of the Museum's building program later in the '60's, when the Museum will expand to the west and will occupy the Whitney Museum building on West 54th Street, the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Sculpture Garden will become the center of the Museum and its activities.

Photographs and additional material available from Elizabeth Shaw, Director,
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