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MODERN GARDENS AND THE LANDSCAPE by Elizabeth B. Kassler; 104 pages, 135 illustrations (6 in color), hardbound \$5.95, paperbound \$2.75; published by The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Hardbound edition distributed by Doubleday and Co., Inc.

MODERN GARDENS AND THE LANDSCAPE by Elizabeth B. Kassler, the first book to discuss the relationship between the modern garden and the natural landscape in terms of contemporary aesthetics, has just been published by The Museum of Modern Art.

While exploring these interrelationships between man, land and plants, between artifacts and natural facts, Mrs. Kassler presents a view of modern water gardens, flower gardens, sculpture gardens, outdoor rooms, plazas, parks, playgrounds and urban squares illustrated in 135 annotated photographs, six of them in color.

Among the works illustrated are the daring Mexican lava-landscapes of Luis Barragán, the boldly artificial gardens of Roberto Burle Marx in Brazil, the symbolically formal Mughal Gardens in New Delhi by Sir Edwin Lutyens, the delightful parks and serene Forest Cemetery in Stockholm, Sweden; the designs of Frank Lloyd Wright, Isamu Noguchi, Le Corbusier, Alvar Aalto, Charles Eames, the men who have formed our modern landscape.

The contemporary landscape designer, heir to the anti-architectural style of 18th century England -- the pastoral parks and picturesque hunting grounds romanticized in poetry and painting -- also inherits the classical Western concept of landscape design as architecture as well as the influences of Chinese landscape painting, Japanese gardens and Moslem waterworks. From this heritage, Mrs. Kassler concludes that the contemporary designer must create in terms of his own place and time, his own faith and vision.

"Should less be demanded of landscape design as an art than as a science?" she asks. "Isn't it possible that a garden or plaza or park or boulevard must finally be judged as an essay in the tenancy of the earth? If it is to pass such a test ... it must appear to be of its place, not on its place, and its natural materials must seem to belong together with a more than formal relationship.

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"Out of all this," Mrs. Kassler says, "the artist makes his own truth. Like his brothers back through history to the mythical Garden, he will recreate the landscape according to his own subjective image of reality. As he takes hold of earth, plants, and water, the materials unique to his art, let him only beware lest he destroy through his act of possession the genius of that which he has sought to possess."

One-time Curator of Architecture at The Museum of Modern Art, Mrs. Kassler -- the former Elizabeth Mock -- is the author of Built in U.S.A. Since 1932, If You Want to Build a House and The Architecture of Bridges.

Photographs, review copies and additional information available from Elizabeth Shaw, Director, and Lynn Traiger, Assistant Director, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, N. Y. 10019. CI 5-8900.