

**Symposium**  
**“From Garden Art to Landscape Architecture–**  
**Traditions, Re-Evaluations, and Future Perspectives”**

The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Gartenkunst und Landschaftskultur (DGGL) (German Association of Garden Art and Landscape Culture) and the department Herrenhäuser Gärten of the state capital of Hannover has invited the Centre of Garden Art and Landscape Architecture (CGL) to hold a joint conference in 2018 on the history of garden art. It was initiated by the vice president of the DGGL, Ronald Clark. The DGGL annual theme for 2017 is ‘Gartenkunst’ (‘garden art’).

Organisers:

- Deutsche Gesellschaft für Gartenkunst und Landschaftsarchitektur (DGGL)
- Fachbereich Herrenhäuser Gärten, state capital of Hanover
- European Garden Heritage Network (EGHN)
- VolkswagenStiftung
- Centre of Garden Art and Landscape Architecture (CGL), Leibniz Universität Hannover

Date:

14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> of September 2018

Place: Schloss Herrenhausen (Herrenhausen Palace), Hannover

The following paragraphs present ideas for a symposium dedicated to the relevant issues.

Originally, the area of responsibility for landscape architecture was based on the premise that planning and creating open spaces such as parks and gardens was the business of garden artists. Today, it also incorporates the protection of natural resources and the environment, urban planning, tourism planning and other disciplines, or at least, there are significant overlaps with other planning disciplines. Professionals trained as landscape architects work in numerous places, for example in municipal administration such as parks commissions and parks departments, city planning offices, in governmental agencies such as nature conservation agencies, departments for the conservation of historic buildings and in educational institutions like universities – as employees, civil servants or freelancers.

The development of landscape architecture into a profession involving university training gradually took place during the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in connection with the processes of industrialisation and urbanisation.

In the Early Modern Period this field of activity was indeed considered part of the arts, an art, moreover, that was closely connected to sciences such as mathematics.<sup>1</sup> Professionals of the Baroque era, e.g. André Le Notre, who created extraordinary gardens like Vaux-le-Vicomte, Sceaux and Versailles, were perceived as ‘garden artists’. During the course of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, discussions related to garden art followed the shift from a formal baroque garden to landscape gardens. It was in this context that, in Germany, philosophy gained significance for garden art and vice versa, with philosophers acting as leading garden theorists.

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<sup>1</sup> On this issue, see for example Volker Remmert, *The Art of Garden and Landscape Design and the Mathematical Sciences in the Early Modern Period*, in: Hubertus Fischer, Volker R. Remmert and Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn (Eds.), *Gardens, Knowledge and the Sciences in the Early Modern Period* (= Trends in the History of Science), Birkhäuser/Springer International Publishing AG Switzerland, 2016

Beginning with Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten and Georg Friedrich Meier during the 1750s, aesthetics, as a science of sentiment – as opposed to reason – gained increasing significance as a philosophical field of reflection, culminating in Emanuel Kant's "Critical Philosophy".<sup>2</sup> In the context of this development, the garden increasingly became a subject of art history as well as of philosophy. Garden theory was strongly influenced by the intellectual debate that led to the establishment of aesthetics as a discipline between 1750 and 1790.<sup>3</sup> An important point of critique within this new discipline was that, owing to the image of nature cultivated by the natural sciences, too many aspects of humans' experiences of nature went ignored.<sup>4</sup>

Traditions that considered the field of garden design an 'art', as well as a corresponding image of the profession are clearly visible in Germany, up until the end of the 19th century at least regarding language use. In 1887, for example, the 'Verein deutscher Gartenkünstler' (VdG) ('Association of German garden artists') was founded in Dresden as the first professional interest group in landscape architecture. However, it is doubtful whether terms such as 'Gartenkunst' ('garden art') and 'Gartenkünstler' ('garden artist') were considered rather technical, understood as professional designations only that were no longer meant to refer to garden art as part of the fine arts/visual arts.

It was only at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that the 'Verein deutscher Gartenkünstler' converted from a professional interest group into the 'Deutsche Gesellschaft für Gartenkunst' ('German Association for Garden Art'), the present-day DGGL, which also accepted lay-people with an interest in gardens.<sup>5</sup> In the wake of these developments, the 'Bund Deutscher Gartenarchitekten' (BDGA) ('League of German Garden Architects') and the 'Verband Deutscher Gartenarchitekten' (VDG) ('Union of German Garden Architects') were founded in 1913. Both institutions were reconstituted after the Second World War as the 'Bund Deutscher Landschaftsarchitekten' ('Union of German Landscape Architects').<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See Michael Lee, *The German 'Mittelweg'. Garden Theory and Philosophy in the Time of Kant*, Routledge, New York & London, 2013

<sup>3</sup> Between 1779 and 1785, the professor of philosophy Christian Caius Laurentz Hirschfeld, one of the most important landscape garden theorists in Germany, published his five volume work "Theorie der Gartenkunst". The Leipzig philosophy professor C. H. Heydenreich wrote his "System der Ästhetik" in 1790. Two years later, he translated Archibald Alison's "Essays on the Nature and Principles of Taste" (1790) into German. In 1792, Wilhelm Gottlieb Becker, professor of philosophy in Dresden, wrote his famous work "Das Seifersdorfer Thal" (Leipzig), as well as the book "Der Plauensche Grund bei Dresden". Johann G. Grohmann, professor for philosophy in Wittenberg started publishing his widely distributed "Ideenmagazin für Liebhaber von Gärten", a kind of sample book containing examples of architecture, grottos, bridges, benches, ruins, hermitages and more for utilisation in landscape gardens. In 1797, Grohmann wrote his work „Neue Theorie der schönen Gartenkunst“ (Leipzig).

Friedrich Schiller and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe were also involved in the discussion on garden art as an art (form) (see, e.g., Friedrich Schiller, "Über den Gartenkalender auf das Jahr 1795"). Schiller's writings on aesthetics are attributed to a phase of development "during which garden art had already lost its position of supremacy within the hierarchy of the arts" (see also Stefan Groß, *Die Weimarer Klassik und die Gartenkunst: Über den Gattungsdiskurs und die „Bildenden Künste“ in den theoretischen Schriften von Goethe, Schiller und Krause*, Peter Lang, Frankfurt/M., 2009).

<sup>4</sup> For example, aesthetics, as an attempt to capture and describe the poetic experiences and sensations during a sunset, was just as important and legitimate as scientific explanations of the same phenomenon. Confronted by a form of science which reduced the manifoldness of this and other natural phenomena to simple geometry, coordinates and general laws of nature, the founders of aesthetics endeavoured to systematically record these special experiences which could not be reduced to scientific models. Thus, from the very beginning, aesthetics as a scholarly discipline had a predisposition for natural beauty which eventually also favoured garden theories with affiliations to the English landscape garden.

<sup>5</sup> On the history of the VdG and the DGGL see Gert Gröning and Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn, 1887-1987. *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Gartenkunst und Landschaftspflege (DGGL). Ein Rückblick auf 100 Jahre DGGL*, Boskett-Verlag, Berlin, 1987.

<sup>6</sup> On the history of the BDLA see Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn and Gert Gröning, 1913-1988. *75 Jahre Bund Deutscher Landschaftsarchitekten BDLA. Teil I: Zur Entwicklung der Interessenverbände der Gartenarchitekten in der Weimarer Republik und im Nationalsozialismus*, Köllen Druck + Verlag GmbH, Bonn, 1988.

Twelve years after the foundation of the 'Verein deutscher Gartenkünstler', the 'American Society of Landscape

Nowadays in Germany, the term 'Gartenkunst' ('garden art') is restricted to historic parks and gardens, regardless of whether these met the artistic demands at the time of their creation, or because they have survived to this day. This retrospective view on garden art has probably become prevalent during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The question is whether there is such a thing as contemporary garden art. Which present-day parks and gardens would be regarded as garden art? Which criteria would have to be fulfilled in order to be classified as a garden artist? Who would be worth considering?

These issues need to be raised in an interdisciplinary discussion, as the question of art is relevant just as much to architecture as it is to many other areas. The international symposium, "From Garden Art to Landscape Architecture" invites representatives from different disciplines. It addresses questions which, based on the notion of garden art, will help to reconstruct, among other things, its historical development as well as the professional self-image in various phases of development, culminating in the question whether this term can still possess relevance today.

One section will examine the transformation of the term 'Gartenkunst' both nationally and internationally. One core theme will be constituted by the points of radical change during the 20<sup>th</sup> century during which contemporary garden art was replaced in favour of historic garden art.

The second section discusses if contemporary garden art exists or even should exist. Do the fine arts/visual arts of today have the sole right of representation? Where is the boundary to architecture? Does such a thing as 'Baukunst' ('art of construction') still exist in this discipline? What would denote a landscape architect as an artist?

For the third section, internationally renowned landscape architects whose work features distinctive characteristics will self-reflexively take a stand on the question of whether their creations are garden art or not.

Apart from lectures by distinguished academics, this topic is supposed to be discussed on an international level by young researchers. Following a call for papers, 10 candidates will be selected for a fellowship and receive the chance to present their research projects in a three-minute lightning talk during the symposium. Moreover, several groups consisting of students of landscape architecture from selected German universities will also take part, and during the course of a seminar/ 'wochenstegreif' will develop statements which will also be presented as lightning-talks. The symposium is meant to provide both experienced and young researchers alike with the opportunity for intense debate and for networking.

The results of the symposium will be published.

Ronald Clark  
Herrenhausen Gardens  
City of Hanover

Jens Spanjer  
German Society for  
Garden Art and  
Landscape Culture

Anorthe Wetzell  
Volkswagen Foundation

Joachim Wolschke-Bulmahn  
Centre of Garden Art and  
Landscape Architecture  
Leibniz University of Hanover

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Architects' (ASLA) was formed in the USA. The designation and use of the term 'Landscape Architect', the internationally renowned title to this day, may indicate various lines of traditions and contexts of origin in different countries, which is a further possible line of enquiry for the symposium.