

Through exhibitions that have captured the nation—and the world’s—imagination, and groundbreaking programming, interest in the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden has never been higher. In the last three years, the Hirshhorn has enjoyed record annual visitation approaching 1,000,000, more than 50% higher than in each of the preceding three years. Our campus is the only museum directly integrated into the National Mall, which receives 35 million annual visitors. Through this powerful combination: visionary exhibits and public programs exploring the most compelling ideas of our age and one-of-a-kind geography, we are poised to engage and delight so many more. But to do so, we require a campus optimized for the public appreciation, study and preservation of the national collection of modern and contemporary art. Forty-five years after opening, the Sculpture Garden requires critical infrastructure repairs, enhanced universal accessibility, and dynamic new galleries that both highlight the beauty of our modern sculpture masterworks and provide new venues for 21st century large scale installations and performance art.

The attached report commissioned by the Smithsonian confirms that the Sculpture Garden is a palimpsest that has evolved since its opening. The report proposes a layered period of significance for the Hirshhorn’s Sculpture Garden: 1974, 1981. As detailed in the report, the sculpture garden at the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) in New York was the first purposely designed garden for the exhibition of changing displays of sculpture. The MOMA sculpture garden has been modified four times since 1953, maintaining the spirit of the original design. Looking to MOMA’s example and looking forward, museum leadership has invited renowned artist and architect Hiroshi Sugimoto to expand harmoniously on these achievements. To embrace the Sculpture Garden’s full potential, the Hirshhorn believes that an artist’s gesture paired with a sensitive design is essential.

The Hirshhorn seeks to revitalize our Sculpture Garden to:

- Repair infrastructure to curb flooding and protect current and future artwork, trees and plants.
- Reestablish the cohesion of the Hirshhorn’s Sculpture Garden, the Plaza and Museum.
- Create a new “front door” on the National Mall that welcomes more visitors to the Hirshhorn by widening sightlines into the Sculpture Garden and improving accessibility, shade and seating.
- Increase our display of modern sculpture by almost 50% to strongest effect, charting evolutions and creating new narratives within the history of art.
- Respond and adapt to changes in artmaking by designating flexible spaces for the presentation of time-based artwork, large-format sculpture and site-specific installations.

Comprising a quarter of Joseph Hirshhorn’s original bequest, modern sculptures remain a critical aspect of the collection. The 1.5-acres on the National Mall and four-acre Plaza surrounding Gordon Bunshaft’s sculptural building compose an outdoor venue for the rotating display of the Museum’s world-class permanent collection including bronzes by the likes of Auguste Rodin, Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth, as well as contemporary pieces, loans and site-responsive commissions such as our current exhibition by *Lee Ufan: Open Dimension*.

Sculpture gardens have long been designated as sites for the quiet contemplation of art—and while providing such opportunities remains key to the Hirshhorn’s revitalization—many contemporary artists are working with new media on unprecedented scales. Time-based art such as video and sound works have become a central focus for the Hirshhorn, as well as for our global peers including the Tate Modern, The Whitney and Guggenheim Museums as well as performance-focused spaces such as The Shed in New York and the forthcoming Philadelphia Contemporary. The Hirshhorn requires a flexible space worthy of its collection and future acquisitions.

On the following pages, Robinson & Associates provides a carefully researched report on the 1981 modifications to Bunshaft's design. They recommend that the period of significance be amended to "1974, 1981", which will become the baseline dates for assessment of proposed changes under the Sculpture Garden Revitalization project. The report on an analysis of the 1981 design has yielded the most in-depth scholarly review and analysis of D.C. landscape architect Lester Collins to date. It has also revealed parallels between 1981 and our current proposal. Select observations gleaned from the report:

- The Hirshhorn's project goals for the Collins-era redesign and the current concept design are the same: improve access to the Sculpture Garden for all visitors; increase shade for visitor comfort; create outdoor gallery spaces to enhance the display of sculpture and diversify our programming and future acquisitions.
- Existing and proposed spatial organization of the Sculpture Garden will be retained following Collins's spatial organization of a sunken lower level, concentrated garden rooms on the east side, and more flexible space on the west side.
- Research for the report revealed that the north overlook in the concept design aligns with Collins's original unrealized design for the Sculpture Garden.

The layered design of the 1974 and 1981 eras is evident in the Sculpture Garden. Since 1981 incremental changes have been made to plantings, paving, and the design program, including the closure of the east fountain. As the scale of contemporary art continues to evolve and trees and plants flourish, the Garden must evolve as well, to serve our audiences by fulfilling the Hirshhorn's powerful mission. The following analysis may serve to support future design decisions as consultation continues.

We welcome your feedback,



Melissa Chiu
Hirshhorn Director

Hirshhorn Museum Sculpture Garden Significance and Integrity Report

prepared by Robinson & Associates, Inc.,

and

Laura L. Knott, Historical Landscape Architect,

for

The Smithsonian Institution,

Architectural History and Historic Preservation Division

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Introduction

In the forty-five years of its existence, the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden has always featured a rotating display of sculpture, derived from the founding collection of Joseph H. Hirshhorn, as well as works subsequently purchased or on loan to the museum. To help fulfill its mission as the nation's museum of modern and contemporary art, architect Gordon Bunshaft (1909-1990) designed a sunken garden within the National Mall elm panel north of his drum-shaped museum building, between Jefferson and Adams drives. Its lowest level dropped fourteen feet below street level, the garden included concrete walls of the same granite aggregate as the museum itself, changes in elevation creating terraces, and an arrangement of gravel surfaces and dispersed sculptures that called to mind aspects of Japanese Zen gardens. Certain shortcomings with the sculpture garden as constructed quickly became apparent, and the Smithsonian Institution took advantage of a charge to make the space accessible to all visitors to seek a redesign that addressed these shortcomings.

In 1977, the Smithsonian Institution hired Washington, D.C., landscape architect Lester Collins (1914-1993) to devise a concept for the redesign of the garden, select plants, and prepare preliminary drawings and narratives for alterations within Bunshaft's original framework. Collins consulted with Hirshhorn staff, especially Director Abram Lerner, on the redesign, while the Smithsonian's Office of Facilities Planning and Engineering Services prepared plans and renderings for presentation to review agencies. When the design was ready to move to the construction phase, the Smithsonian hired E/A Design Group of Washington, D.C., to prepare architectural and technical drawings and to supervise construction. SI's Office of Horticulture was responsible for selecting specimens to be planted in the garden and to oversee their installation.

After the redesign was implemented, the composition and physical framework of the Bunshaft original – its rectilinear form, location below street level, entrances on axis with the museum building, south stair, concrete walls, terraces, and rectangular pool – remained, but Collins's work changed the garden's circulation, vegetation, paving, and internal spatial arrangement, adding elements that created a new character still evident today. Instead of the minimalist Japanese Zen garden precedents designed as aids to meditation that inspired Bunshaft, Collins drew on the rich vegetation and "hide-and-reveal" devices common to Chinese and Japanese gardening traditions based on Chinese landscape painting. These traditions were predicated on movement through space that allowed a landscape to unfold as the visitor walked through it.

The Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, already determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, is the subject of a draft National Register nomination, which determined that the complex was significant under National Register Criterion A as representative of the evolution of the Smithsonian Institution and the National Mall in the third quarter of the twentieth century and as an important part of the growth of the Smithsonian during this period. The nomination also found the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden to be significant under Criterion C "as an outstanding example of Modernist architecture by a recognized master in the field." Further, it concluded that the Hirshhorn satisfied National Register Criteria Consideration G, displaying the exceptional importance needed to place properties less than fifty years of age on the register. The nomination posited 1974 as the period of significance for the property, concluding that later alterations to the plaza and sculpture garden were

compatible with the resource as originally constructed, but did not “rise to the same level of significance as the original Bunshaft design.”¹

As part of consultation under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act on the proposed Hirshhorn Sculpture Garden Revitalization, the National Capital Planning Commission, the District of Columbia State Historic Preservation Office, and consulting parties requested that the Smithsonian Institution reevaluate the period of significance employed in the draft National Register of Historic Places nomination. The parties asked that the Smithsonian review the potential significance of alterations to the sculpture garden by Collins in 1981. Collins had been chairman of the landscape architecture department at the Harvard Graduate School of Design from 1950 to 1953 and had collaborated with architects such as Walter Gropius, Cesar Pelli, Edward Durell Stone, Charles W. Moore, and Hugh Newell Jacobsen during his long career. Two properties with which Collins was involved are listed in the National Register of Historic Places, and one was recorded by the Historic American Landscape Survey. In the two National Register nominations, Collins is noted as a master landscape architect.

Purpose and Methodology

The purpose of the current report is to address the issues raised by the review agencies and consulting parties. The report seeks to review the nature and extent of Collins’s redesign and the contributions of relevant Smithsonian offices and private contractors, to analyze the redesign as compared to other similar works of the period, to review the landscape architect’s career and achievements, and to determine whether extending the period of significance is warranted.

To accomplish this task, the consultant team first reviewed documentation compiled by the Smithsonian Institution’s Office of Architectural History and Historic Preservation (AHHP). These documents included the draft National Register nomination for the Hirshhorn, the South Mall Campus Cultural Landscape Report (February 2018), agency submissions and reviews, and correspondence associated with the Smithsonian’s development plans for the South Mall area. The review also included documents and images gathered by AHHP from the Smithsonian Archives, as well as transcripts of interviews with former employees of relevant Smithsonian offices. AHHP continued its research contribution through the process of drafting the report, providing photographs, additional interviews, internet research, Collins’s “fellows file” from the American Society of Landscape Architects, and other information.

The consultant team undertook additional research in the Smithsonian Archives to develop a more complete picture of the process of hiring Collins for the redesign project, the evolution of the alteration scheme, the garden’s construction and plantings, the development of the landscape as those plantings matured, and changes made to the redesign in later years. The research was accomplished both at the archives itself and through its internet portal. The consultants also conducted interviews or submitted questions to additional Smithsonian staff members. Important in the review of the Smithsonian Archives were photographs taken from the 1970s until the early 2000s, which allowed the consultant team to track the growth and decay of vegetation, as well as changes to hardscape features. The team reviewed images available from internet resources, such as Getty Images, Wikimedia Commons, and websites of

¹ Bill Marzella, National Register of Historic Places Registration Form: Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden (draft), U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, n.d., 8:11-13. The quotations can be found on pages 11 and 13, respectively.

relevant architects, landscape architects, and design magazines. Additional primary research was undertaken in the minutes and transcripts of meetings of the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts. Review of the Records of the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts in the Cartographic and Architectural Drawings room at the National Archives and Records Administration in College Park did not reveal any additional drawings associated with the 1981 redesign.

Collins himself did not leave an archive of his professional career, although the individuals, firms, and clients with whom he collaborated have retained material related to his work. Known archives of Collins's collaborators include that of John Ormsbee Simonds, with whom Collins partnered in the landscape architecture firm of Collins, Simonds and Simonds between 1955 and 1970. Simonds's papers are held in the Special Collections department of the University of Florida Libraries. The Innisfree Foundation, of which Collins was the president from 1960 until his death in 1993, also possesses materials related to the landscape architect's work there. Since Collins was an independent practitioner when he undertook the Hirshhorn work, however, it is unlikely that these archives would have materials specifically related to the sculpture garden project. They could, however, provide information on the projects with which he was engaged and his manner of working. A finding aid for the Simonds papers was reviewed to determine whether personal correspondence might be contained there. No obviously related records to the sculpture garden were identified, although the finding aid did not identify individual correspondents.

Further, the consultant team undertook research to create context for the discussion of Collins's career, the influences on his evolution as a landscape architect, modern sculpture garden design, and accessible design of the period in repositories such as the Library of Congress and the National Gallery of Art Library, as well as online sources. Among the online sources were the Dumbarton Oaks Library and Archives, JSTOR, the *Washington Post*, the *New York Times*, and The Cultural Landscape Foundation. Collins's career has not been the subject of a wide range of scholarly study, the most substantial being the entries written by landscape historian Nancy Slade for *Shaping the American Landscape* and *Shaping the Postwar Landscape* in The Cultural Landscape Foundation's *Pioneers of American Landscape* series, published by University of Virginia Press, and the National Register nomination for Innisfree, prepared by the Innisfree Foundation, which was accepted by the Keeper on September 3, 2019. Research in secondary sources yielded information on Collins's career, his other works, evaluations of his design for the Hirshhorn Sculpture Garden in the press, the Chinese and Japanese gardens that exerted a profound influence on his thinking, the trend toward building sculpture gardens in association with museums of modern and contemporary art that flourished in the last half of the twentieth century, and exemplary manifestations of this practice. This information established a context for an evaluation of the potential National Register significance of the sculpture garden as redesigned by Collins in consultation with Smithsonian and Hirshhorn staff.

Next, the team conducted fieldwork to document existing conditions at the sculpture garden. They then compared existing conditions with those documented by the Smithsonian photographs from 1981 to 1984 and by the 1983 Plant Materials Accession Plan, thought to reflect Collins' final design of 1981, to determine the integrity of surviving landscape characteristics and features. The team identified the key landscape characteristics and features of this designed landscape: spatial organization, topography,

vegetation, circulation, views and vistas, constructed water features, and buildings and structures.² The team then developed a narrative comparative analysis, illustrated with graphics and photographs.

Based on the analysis, the team developed an understanding of existing character-defining landscape characteristics and features that date to 1981, and then assessed their integrity based on the seven aspects or qualities the National Register uses to define this concept: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The team used this analysis and the significance evaluation as the basis for addressing the question as to whether the period of significance for the draft National Register of Historic Places nomination for the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden should be revised. The study has concluded that the overlay of Collins's 1981 alterations onto the framework of Bunshaft's 1974 garden warrants a revision of the period of significance for the National Register of Historic Places nomination. The study recommends that the period of significance be identified as "1974, 1981" to recognize both the original design and Collins's later changes.

² Keller, J. Timothy, and Genevieve P. Keller. National Register of Historic Places Bulletin 18, *How to Evaluate and Nominate Designed Historic Landscapes*. U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Interagency Resources Division, 1996.

Context

Museum Sculpture Gardens, 1950 through 1990

“The impulse to place statues in an ornamental setting is as old as civilization itself,” according to Elisabeth B. MacDougall, who was director of the landscape architecture studies program at Dumbarton Oaks and visiting professor at the Harvard Graduate School of Design from 1972 to 1988. “... [T]he play of light and shade on the sculptures’ surfaces, and the contrast between the unmoving statues and the changing, moving natural setting have had a universal appeal to all mankind.”³ In addition to its aesthetic functions, statuary and the settings in which it was placed often expressed didactic, religious, or political ideas. Examples include statues of gods and goddesses in ancient Greek and Roman temples or of saints in Renaissance churches. Even when statues were moved from their original sites, they were often placed in such a manner as to create an iconographic narrative. The villas of prominent cardinals in Renaissance Rome, for instance, often included gardens that used ancient statuary, recovered from the city’s ruins, along with contemporary works to illustrate man’s progress from pagan to Christian beliefs.⁴

This situation changed in the late nineteenth century when sculptural works started to shed their religious and political associations, as well as ties to specific sites. Methods of producing multiple casts of the same design were also developed, further distancing statuary from specific locations. In an influential essay published in 1979, Rosalind Krauss pointed to two sculptures by Auguste Rodin (1840-1917) – *The Gates of Hell* (commissioned in 1880) and *Monument to Balzac* (commissioned in 1891) – as exemplifying this movement. Both commissions sought works for specific sites, but yielded statues that were never erected in their proposed locations. In the case of *Balzac*, Rodin’s subjective interpretation of the French writer proved unsatisfactory to the Société des Gens de Lettres, a private organization that had commissioned the work. The statue thus became, in Krauss’s words, “siteless,” and in fact was not cast in Rodin’s lifetime. Today, multiple castings of *Balzac* are displayed in Europe and the Americas, including the Hirshhorn Sculpture Garden, reinforcing the notion that modern sculpture is “functionally placeless and largely self-referential,” essentially “nomadic.”⁵

As a result of their disengagement from cultural references or ideological purposes, sculptural works in the twentieth century became more abstract. In addition, they were often cast independently of their sites and acquired as additions to collections of art works, often gathered by wealthy patrons, rather than planned for a particular setting. With sculpture no longer integral to the composition of their exhibit spaces, a new garden typology evolved in which the objects in a collection, whether owned privately or as part of a public museum, were placed in spaces created for – or in existing spaces simply used as sites of – changing displays of a variety of works.⁶ “The installation of outdoor sculpture

³ Elisabeth B. MacDougall, “Introduction,” in Sidney Lawrence and George Foy, *Music in Stone: Great Sculpture Gardens of the World* (New York: Scala Books, 1984), 8.

⁴ Sidney Lawrence and George Foy, *Music in Stone: Great Sculpture Gardens of the World* (New York: Scala Books, 1984), 9-14; Peter Reed, “The Sculpture Garden in Modern History,” in *Peter Walker and Partners, Nasher Sculpture Center Garden*, Knowlton School of Architecture, Source Books in Landscape Architecture, no. 3, Jane Amidon, series editor, (New York: Princeton University Press, 2006), 134.

⁵ Rosalind Krauss, “Sculpture in the Expanded Field,” *October* 8 (Spring 1979), 34; “Auguste Rodin – *Balzac*, Musée d’Orsay website, https://www.musee-orsay.fr/en/collections/works-in-focus/search/commentaire/commentaire_id/balzac-7084.html?no_cache=1, accessed October 16, 2019.

⁶ Lake Douglas, “Objects in a Garden,” *Landscape Architecture Magazine* 94, no. 3 (March 2004), 82-83.

according to the reputation of the artist rather than that of the subject depicted,” landscape historian Elizabeth Barlow Rogers has written,” is a modernist contribution to landscape design.”⁷

Temporary exhibits in public parks became one avenue for the display of these collections, and some purchasers of the artworks, as well as sculptors themselves, created their own outdoor display areas, usually on their own property. The sculptors Barbara Hepworth and Henry Moore are two twentieth-century artists who created their own outdoor exhibit areas.⁸ Joseph H. Hirshhorn (1899-1981) displayed many of the sculptures he owned on the grounds of his home in Greenwich, Connecticut, before donating his art collection to the Smithsonian.⁹

In *Art Parks: A Tour of America's Sculpture Parks and Gardens*, Francesca Cigola, a writer and curator in New York, defines three categories of outdoor spaces for sculpture that developed during the twentieth century: leisure spaces, collectors' spaces, and learning spaces. The first category are frequently referred to as sculpture parks, through which visitors walk as they view sculpture in a natural setting. Collectors' spaces obviously refer to collections of works placed on private property. Such collectors may be individuals, artists, or corporations, and the display space may be large or small, designed or more natural, depending on the resources and desires of the collector. Cigola defines learning spaces as museums or university grounds used for display of the institution's collections. “The scale, urban character, and architectural nature of these spaces,” she writes, “make them true sculpture gardens that function as individual parts of larger institutions.” She cites the sculpture garden at the Museum of Modern Art in New York and the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden as prominent examples of this learning space type, noting that, at the Hirshhorn, the sculpture garden “shared equal billing” with the museum.¹⁰ In the following analysis, ten sculpture gardens in the United States of the learning space type will be discussed as a context for the Hirshhorn design. The gardens, all at least thirty years old, are listed in Table 1.¹¹

The first garden purposely designed for the exhibition of changing displays of museum collection sculpture in the United States is thought to be that of the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) in New York, created in a temporary manner for the museum's opening in 1939 and made permanent in the design of architect Philip Johnson (1906-2005) and landscape architect James Fanning (1911-1998) in 1953.¹² The MOMA garden, now known as the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Sculpture Garden, also established two other precedents – the association of sculpture gardens with museums of modern and contemporary art and the use of Modernist design principles in the manifestations of such gardens.

⁷ Elizabeth Barlow Rogers, *Landscape Design: A Cultural and Architectural History* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2001), 435.

⁸ Michael Lancaster, “Sculpture Gardens,” in *The Oxford Companion to Gardens*, Geoffrey and Susan Jellicoe, editors (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 506-508.

⁹ Valerie J. Fletcher, *A Garden for Art* (Washington, D.C.: Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, 1998), 21.

¹⁰ Francesca Cigola, *Art Parks: A Tour of America's Sculpture Parks and Gardens* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2013), 16.

¹¹ Included among the sites is the Kreeger Museum Sculpture Terrace and Sculpture Garden, although the museum did not open to the public until 1994. It is included, however, because the building was designed by Philip Johnson as a home for David Lloyd Kreeger and his wife Carmen with the expressed intention of displaying the couple's collection of modern art and included purpose-built sculpture terraces. It was completed in 1968.

¹² Reed, “The Sculpture Garden in Modern History,” 134.

Table 1 – Museum Sculpture Gardens Constructed between 1950 and 1990

No.	Name	Location	Acres	No. of Works	Density	Designer	Date
1	Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Sculpture Gardens, MOMA	New York, NY	.5	10-15	1 per 2178-1452 sf	Philip Johnson, James Fanning; Zion & Breen; Yoshio Taniguchi	1953, 1964, 1984, 2004
2	Franklin D. Murphy Sculpture Garden, UCLA	Los Angeles, CA	5	72	1 per 3025 sf	Ralph Cornell	1967
3	Oakland Museum of California	Oakland, CA	.56	10-15	1 per 2439-1626 sf	Kevin Roche John Dinkeloo; Dan Kiley; Geraldine Knight Scott	1969
4	Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, SI	Washington, DC	1.3	65	1 per 871 sf	Gordon Bunshaft; Lester Collins	1974, 1981
5	Janet and Alan Wurtzbarger Sculpture Garden, BMA	Baltimore, MD	1.1	34	1 per 1409 sf	George Patton	1980
6	Dallas Museum of Art	Dallas, TX	1.2	20	1 per 2614 sf	Edward Larrabee Barnes, Dan Kiley	1984
7	Noguchi Museum Sculpture Garden	Long Island City, NY	?	15-20	?	Isamu Noguchi, Shoji Sadao	1985, 2004, 2008
8	Lillie and Hugh Roy Cullen Sculpture Garden, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston	Houston, TX	1.5	35	1 per 1869 sf	Isamu Noguchi, Shoji Sadao, Johnny Steele	1986
9	Ryda and Robert H. Levi Sculpture Garden, Baltimore Museum of Art	Baltimore, MD	1.6	14	1 per 4,978 sf	Joseph Hibbard and Don Olson, Sasaki Associates	1988
10	Minneapolis Sculpture Garden and Outdoor Galleries, Walker Art Center	Minneapolis, MN	11	40	1 per 11,979 sf	Edward Larrabee Barnes and Peter Rothschild	1988
11	Kreeger Museum Sculpture Terrace and Garden	Washington, DC	5.5	15	1 per 15,972 sf	Philip Johnson	1994 (1968)



Figure 1 – A portion of the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Sculpture Garden, as designed by Philip Johnson and James Fanning. (Museum of Modern Art, 1953)

Sidney Lawrence and George Foy, in their book *Music in Stone: Great Sculpture Gardens of the World*, describe Johnson and Fanning's Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Sculpture Garden as a "serene, modernist, Miesian design," a "strongly geometric piazza with islands" of vegetation.¹³ (Figure 1) The site, located slightly below street level immediately adjacent to the museum, encompasses approximately .5 acres, which Johnson enclosed with a 14-foot-high gray brick wall and paved with unpolished gray and white Vermont marble. He and Fanning broke up the space with plantings and two rectangular pools crossed by flat bridges. The firm of Robert Zion and Harold Breen, who were both students of Lester Collins at the Graduate School of Design at Harvard, acted as landscape architects in Johnson's expansion of the garden in 1964. The alterations included a raised level at one end, a glass wall along the street and additions to and alterations of the plantings.¹⁴ A 1984 expansion of the museum by Cesar Pelli resulted in a glass-walled "Garden Hall" overlooking the outdoor sculpture space. In 2004, additional museum expansion by architect Yoshio Taniguchi employed glass walls facing the garden in the new wings, further merging interior and exterior space. Zion & Breen's successor firm, Zion, Breen and Richardson Associates, handled changes to the garden itself in 2004, replacing the no longer available Vermont marble paving with slightly lighter stone from Georgia, and maintained the spirit of the 1953 original while changing many details. Cigola describes the existing garden as "a linear composition of horizontal

¹³ Lawrence and Foy, 92.

¹⁴ Ibid., 92-93.



Figure 2 – The Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Sculpture Garden after its 2004 alterations. (New York Times, 2014)

planes,” noting that, with its piazza-like composition, “[t]here is no specific order recommended for enjoying the [10-15] works in the garden.”¹⁵

Three sculpture gardens constructed as “learning spaces” were built in the 1960s in the United States. These include the Franklin D. Murphy Sculpture Garden at the University of California-Los Angeles, designed by landscape architect and planner Ralph Cornell (1890-1972). The Murphy garden, which opened in 1967, was built on the site of a parking lot and essentially acted as a campus “quad” among UCLA academic buildings. The garden’s purpose, its size (5 acres), and the number of sculptures (72) placed among its manicured lawns, rolling terrain, curving pathways, and variety of trees differentiate it from the Hirshhorn’s museum peers. Cigola describes it as “an informal open space” and “a cross between a typical American museum sculpture garden and an urban park.”¹⁶ Of similar size (5.5 acres) is the Kreeger Museum in Washington, D.C., designed by Philip Johnson as the home of David Lloyd and Carmen Kreeger and completed in 1968. Kreeger, the son of Russian immigrants, was a federal government attorney until joining the GEICO insurance firm, eventually becoming its chairman and president. He and his wife used the wealth they accumulated to establish a large collection of art works and hired Johnson to design a house in which they could display them. The Kreeger includes two formal outdoor display spaces. One is a terrace with rectangular pool at the rear of the house, with low arches open towards the grounds and an arcade toward the house. The other is a raised terrace beneath low

¹⁵ Cigola, 79.

¹⁶ Ibid., 141.



Figure 3 – The Kreeger Museum includes two sculpture terraces. (Joe Chrisman, National Docent Symposium)

domes with open walls of columns and beams. (Figure 3) Both spaces follow the modular dimensions of the house, integrating the exterior spaces into the architecture. Multiple sculptures are placed within the “galleries” created by the solids and voids of the architecture. The extensive grounds and woods were also used to display the couple’s collection of twentieth-century sculpture in an informal setting. The home and grounds were transformed into a museum displaying the Kreegers’ important collections of painting and sculpture in 1994.¹⁷

A more relevant predecessor of the Hirshhorn Museum Sculpture Garden is the Oakland Museum of California, which opened in 1969. Architect Kevin Roche (1922-2019) of Kevin Roche, John Dinkeloo and Associates, designed the building, landscape architect Dan Kiley (1912-2004) laid out the terraces, and local landscape architect Geraldine Knight Scott (1904-1989) chose the plantings. The museum is generally dedicated to California history, but it has a small collection of sculpture that is displayed in the rigidly rectangular terraces of the garden that roof and surround the museum. (Figure 4) The design consists of square and rectangular, concrete-walled, outdoor rooms on the terraces with a larger lawn space on the lower terrace surrounded by trees. Low plantings ring the concrete-walled rooms, which

¹⁷ Benjamin Forgey, “The Architecture: Well-Ordered Surprises,” in *The Kreeger Museum, Washington, DC* (Washington, D.C.: The Kreeger Museum, 2009), 35; Stephen Fox, *The Architecture of Philip Johnson* (New York: Bulfinch Press, 2002), 134-137; “History,” Kreeger Museum website, <https://www.kreegermuseum.org/about-us/history>, accessed October 17, 2019.

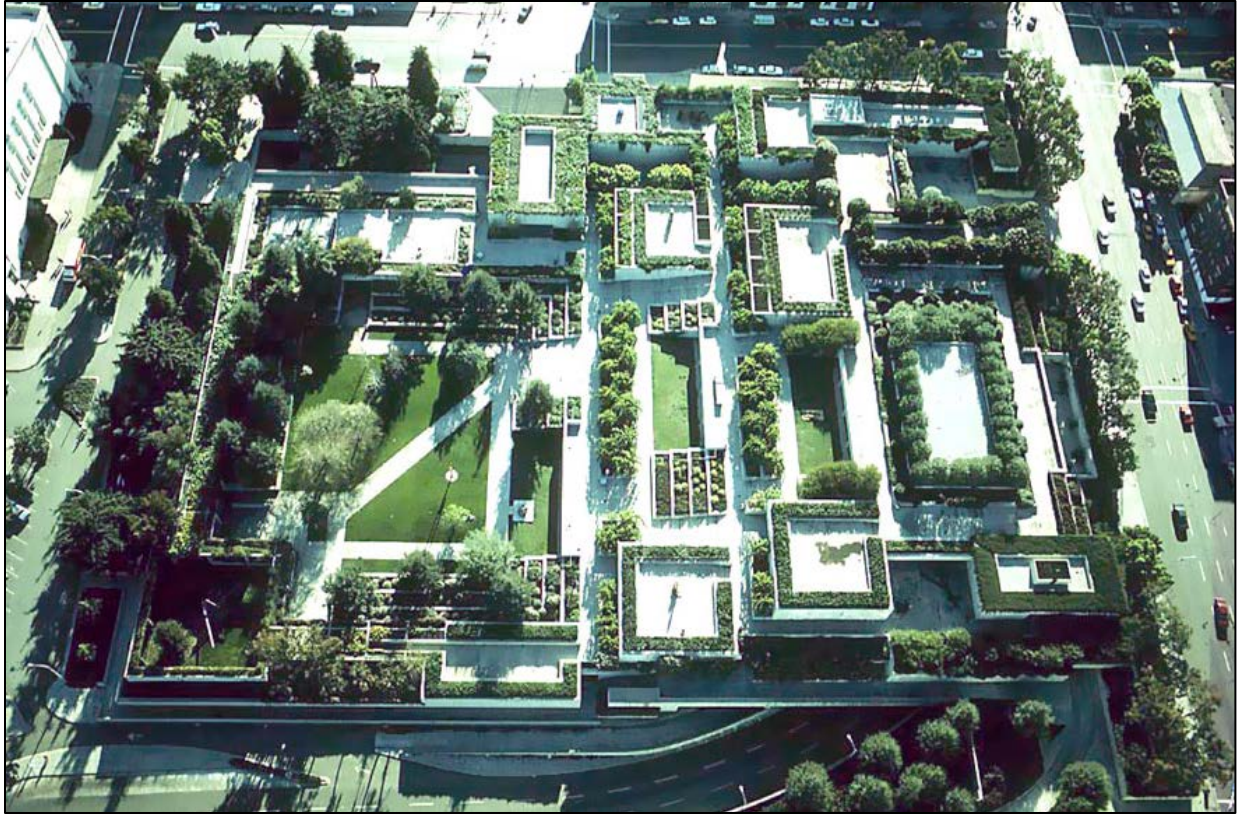


Figure 4 – The Oakland Museum of California features outdoor rooms laid out by Dan Kiley. (Roche Dinkeloo)

are connected by concrete walks. A total of ten to fifteen sculptures are displayed within the rooms, generally one per room, although more are on view in the larger terrace.¹⁸

Kiley designed the garden at the J. Irwin Miller House in Columbus, Indiana, the architect of which was Eero Saarinen (with junior partner Kevin Roche). Both the Oakland terraces and the Miller House express Kiley's dedication to adapting landscape design to the principles of Modern architecture, which he imbibed at Harvard in Walter Gropius's early years teaching there, as well as in his work with Saarinen, Roche, SOM, and other architects.¹⁹ As noted by Peter Walker in his entry about Kiley in *Shaping the American Landscape*, Kiley's gardens "use hedges and walls in a manner influenced by the

¹⁸ Lawrence and Foy, 110; "Oakland Museum of California," The Cultural Landscape website, <https://tclf.org/landscapes/oakland-museum-california>, accessed October 17, 2019.

¹⁹ Landscape architect and University of California professor Marc Treib has identified principles of modern landscape architecture derived mainly from architectural modernism as follows: 1) landscape expression derived from rational approach to conditions created by industrial society, site, and program; 2) concern for space and volume, rather than pattern and plane; 3) abolition of a dominant axis in exchange for omnidirectional space; 4) plants chosen and used for their botanical qualities (appropriateness to specific conditions) and as sculpture; 5) integration of indoor and outdoor spaces; and 6) design of landscapes for human use, rather than for their picturesque qualities. See Marc Treib, "Axioms for a Modern Landscape Architecture," *Modern Landscape Architecture: A Critical Review*, Marc Treib, editor (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1993), 36-40.



Figure 5 – Dan Kiley’s planting design for the sculpture garden follows a Modernist grid pattern suited to the geometry of the hardscape designed by Edward Larrabee Barnes. (landscapevoice.com)

work of modernist architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, and his grids of trees perhaps owe more to the columnar grid of contemporary architecture than to early [garden] designers such as Le Notre.”²⁰

Those principles also informed Kiley’s planting design for the Dallas Museum of Art Sculpture Garden, completed in 1983 as part of Edward Larrabee Barnes’s plans for the museum, sculpture garden, courtyards, and entry. (Figure 5) The hardscape design of the sculpture garden employs a simple palette of limestone walls, paving, and pools to which Kiley added an equally formal planting arrangement. The features divide the 1.2-acre garden into smaller spaces for the display of approximately twenty sculptural works. The composition illustrates the appropriateness of Kiley’s work to the designs of the Modernist architects who frequently employed him.²¹ The small number of works displayed in the sculpture garden provides settings for either individual works or small numbers in dialogue with each other.

George Patton (1920-1991), of Philadelphia, designed a formal exhibition space for the Baltimore Museum of Art in 1980. (Figure 6) Known as the Janet and Alan Wurtzburger Sculpture Garden for its

²⁰ Peter Walker, “Daniel Urban Kiley,” in *Shaping the American Landscape*, Charles A. Birnbaum and Stephanie S. Foell, editors (Charlottesville, Virginia: University of Virginia Press, 2009), 171-174. The quotation can be found on page 174.

²¹ Cigola, 123; “Dallas Museum of Art,” The Cultural Landscape website, <https://tclf.org/landscapes/default/files/microsites/kiley-legacy/DallasMuseum.html>, accessed October 17, 2019.



Figure 6 – George Patton’s Wurtzburger Garden uses a simple Modernist palette of concrete walls, bluestone paving, and modest plantings. (Charles A. Birnbaum, The Cultural Landscape Foundation, 2014)

patrons and donors, the 1.1-acre garden employs beige concrete walls and bluestone paving, with small trees, shrubs, flowers, and ground covers in rectangular voids in the paving or in low planters. Nearly three dozen sculptural works are placed on the paving itself or on low pedestals, per the museum’s wish to display the sculptures as they were in the Wurtzburgers’ garden. The result, according to Frank Edgerton Martin, is perhaps “the finest surviving example of his [Patton’s] work” and “a high point for landscape modernism.”²² Placement of the statuary provides both views of individual works silhouetted against bare concrete walls or in the midst of vegetation, as well as overlapping views of multiple sculptures within the same space. Immediately adjacent to the Wurtzburger garden is another 1980s outdoor exhibition space, the Ryda and Robert H. Levi Sculpture Garden, designed by Joseph Hibbard of Sasaki Associates. Completed in 1988, the garden pursues an informal approach, suited to the sloping landscape and existing tree canopy on the site. Hibbard replanted shrubs, bulbs, and perennials beneath the trees and downplayed hardscape features. The museum dispersed fourteen sculptures along the circumferential path around the 1.6-acre site to maintain its woodland character and picturesque setting.²³

Of the landscape architects analyzed in this survey of ten sculpture gardens, only one, Isamu Noguchi, ranged outside the Western canon in his design approach, and then only in combination with Modernist design precepts. Noguchi (1904-1988) was born in Los Angeles, son of a Japanese poet and an American writer. He lived in both the United States and Japan and made his reputation as a sculptor, having

²² Frank Edgerton Martin, “Baltimore’s Grounds for Art,” *Landscape Architecture Magazine* 99, no. 6 (June 2009), 94-95; Joan Cook, “Obituary: George Patton, 70, a Leading Architect of Landscape Sites,” *New York Times*, March 7, 1991.

²³ Martin, “Baltimore’s Grounds for Art,” 96-97.



Figure 7 – The Noguchi Museum Sculpture Garden in Queens, New York. (Clara Jauquet, courtesy the Noguchi Museum, The Cultural Landscape Foundation website, 2010)

worked as Constantin Brancusi's assistant beginning in 1927. He also designed furniture and sets for collaborations with choreographer Martha Graham. Noguchi's interest in architecture led to a concern for the integration of sculpture into buildings and their sites, resulting in collaborations with Modern architects such as Gordon Bunshaft at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University (1960-1964), where he designed a sunken garden. He also designed the Billy Rose Sculpture Garden for the Israeli Museum in Jerusalem (1960-1965).²⁴

In the United States, Noguchi designed two sculpture gardens during the period under review, both in the mid-1980s. The Noguchi Museum and Sculpture Garden opened in Long Island City, Queens, New York, in 1985. The sculptor had begun the purchase of a brick industrial building across the street from his studio for a museum of his work in the 1970s. He also purchased a gas station next door to the museum building, which he demolished for the garden. The small outdoor space opens from, and can be viewed from, the museum. Noguchi selected and placed the sculptures and plantings in the outdoor space, choosing a katsura tree that grew to 40 feet in height, as well as Japanese black pines, bamboo, and ivy to give texture to the enclosing walls. (Figure 7) The garden is a single space, with an angled,

²⁴ Michael Brenson, "Isamu Noguchi, the Sculptor, Dies at 84," *New York Times*, December 31, 1988, Section 1, page 1.

paved path running through it. The small number of sculptures is displayed directly on the pebbled ground or on low pedestals in view of each other along the path.²⁵

The pebbled surface of the Noguchi Museum Sculpture garden, the selection of plantings, and the arrangement of the sculpture recall the Japanese influences on his design sensibility, although the small space diminishes their role. An example of Noguchi's work more Modernist in conception is the Lillie and Hugh Roy Cullen Sculpture Garden at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (1986). Ludwig Mies van der Rohe designed two buildings in the four-building complex of the museum, the last completed in 1974. The museum planned a sculpture garden for the adjacent rectangular lot, and Noguchi presented several design concepts for the site, conceived in association with architect Shoji Sadao, with whom he also worked at the Noguchi Museum. Construction began in 1984. The design consists of a simple palette of white concrete walls, brown paving, arcs of grass, and dozens of varieties of trees (selected in association with Houston landscape architect Johnny Steele). (Figure 8) The walls help muffle the sounds of traffic passing by the site, but also define spaces on the interior. The combination of walls and curving paths create a variety of views of the roughly thirty works on display in the 1.5-acre site, as well as the trees, which are displayed singly, like the sculptures, growing from the grass panels or from the pavement. As Francesca Cigola notes, "The geometry is complex but not invasive."²⁶ The small number of works and curving paths provide views of individual sculptures against white walls, overlapping views of multiple works, and sculptures juxtaposed against nearby trees.

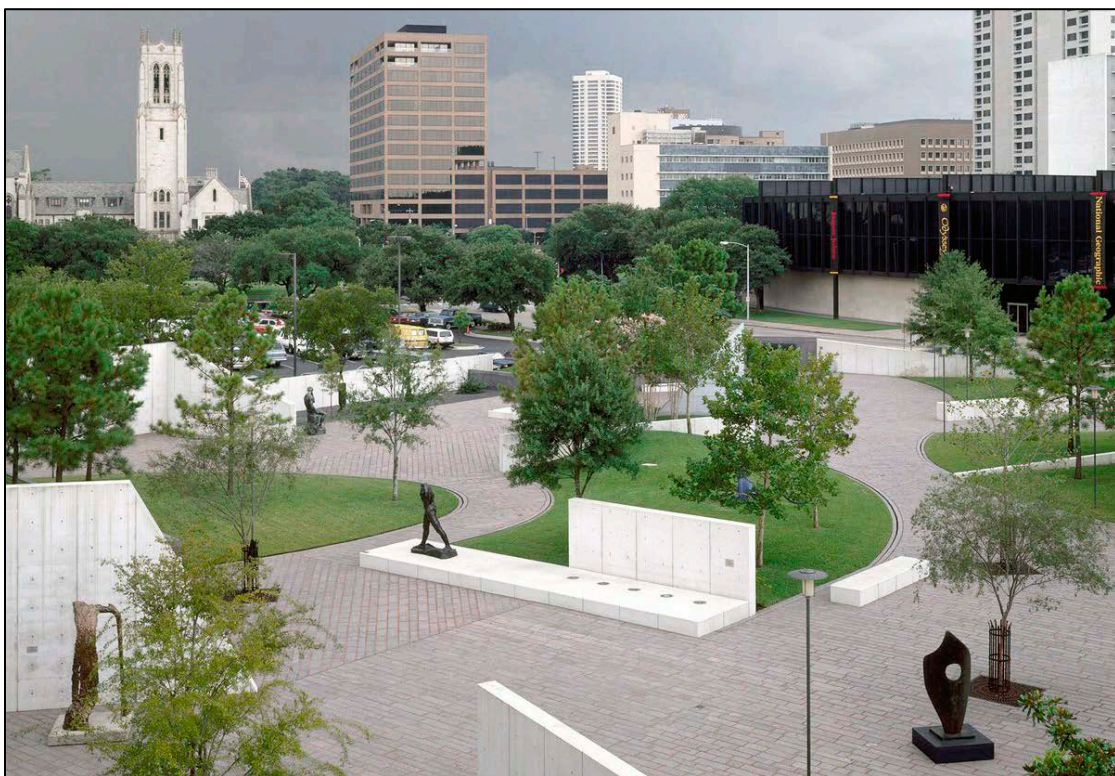


Figure 8 – The curving paths and angled walls create a variety of views in the Cullen Sculpture Garden. (@ArchitectsGraves, Twitter, 2017)

²⁵ Frank Edgerton Martin, "Abstractions of Nature," *Landscape Architecture Magazine* 99, no. 11 (November 2009), 84, 86, 88-91.

²⁶ Cigola, 133.

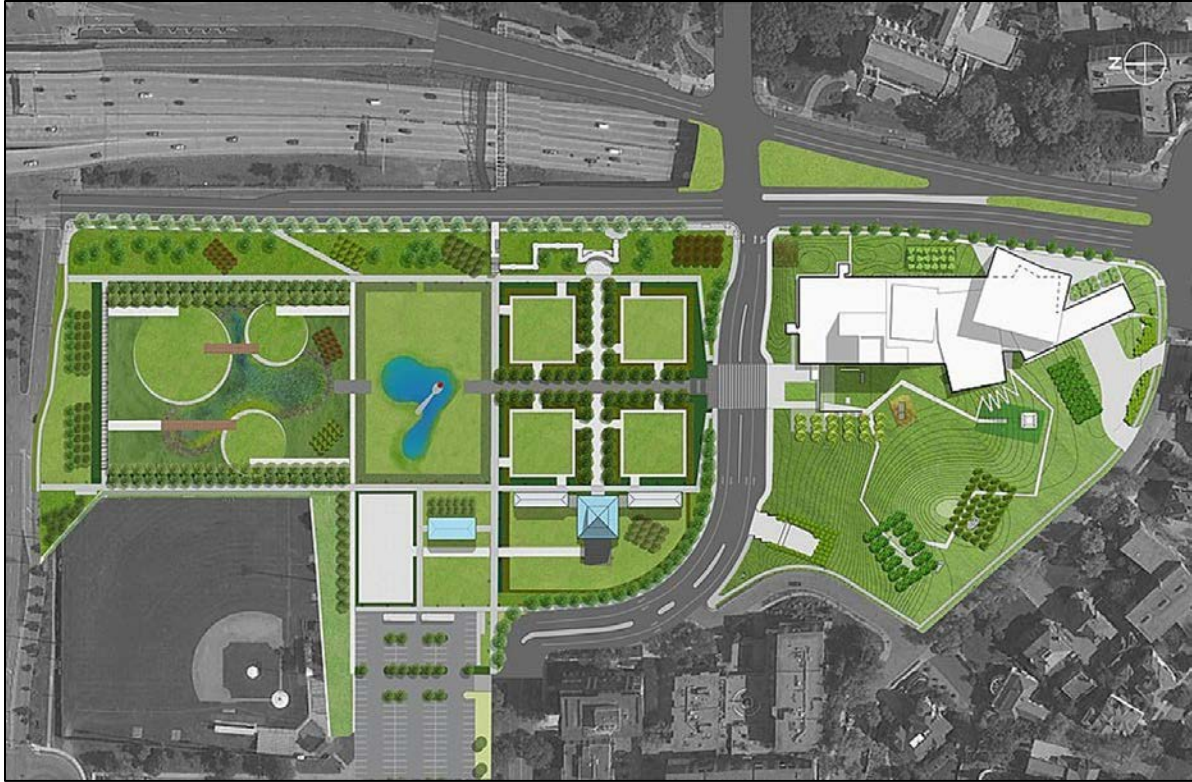


Figure 9 – The large outdoor display space associated with the Walker Art Center includes both formal and informal outdoor exhibit areas. (Walker Art Center website, <https://walkerart.org/about/building-campus>)

The Minneapolis Sculpture Garden and Outdoor Galleries, part of the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, Minnesota, is the largest space considered in this survey – 11 acres holding forty sculptures, as well as additional temporary exhibits. It comprises two spaces, a formal display area in the manner of Italian Renaissance gardens, designed by architect Edward Larrabee Barnes with landscape architect Peter Rothschild, and an informal space, designed by Michael Van Valkenburgh. (Figure 9) The formal sculpture garden opened in 1988, the informal space four years later. The two spaces represent the clients in the project, the Walker Art Center and the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board. The site was reworked in 2017 to create a more unified, 19-acre campus, including the Walker Center itself. The formal sculpture garden is expressed in four open-air rooms, defined by low granite walls and evergreen hedges. Allées of trees follow the axial arrangement. Works are displayed in the smaller garden arranged around the right-angled pathways, within the allées, or in the lawn spaces at the center of the rooms. In the larger space, a smaller number of large works are displayed on open lawn, the broad views uninterrupted by walls or vegetation.²⁷

This review of American sculpture gardens from the period between 1953 and 1990 turns up some commonalities as well as differences among the spaces. Six of the ten gardens encompassed .5 to 1.6 acres of ground, while the other three were 5 acres or larger. The size of the Noguchi Museum garden is unknown, but it clearly fits within the rubric of a small exhibit space. The seven small gardens displayed

²⁷ Cigola, 107; Jean E. Feinberg, "The Museum as Garden," *Landscape Architecture Magazine* 79, no. 3 (April 1989), 68-73; "Building and Campus," Walker Art Center website, <https://walkerart.org/about/building-campus>, <https://walkerart.org/visit/garden>, accessed October 18, 2019.

between ten and thirty-five sculptures (with five of those between ten and twenty). Two of the large gardens (the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden and Outdoor Galleries and the Franklin D. Murphy Sculpture Garden) exhibited forty and seventy-two works, respectively, while the third (Kreeger Museum and Sculpture Garden) displayed fifteen. Not surprisingly, the density of art works in the smaller spaces is higher than in the larger gardens. Five of the six smaller gardens had a density that ranged from one art work per 1,409 square feet to 1 per 2,614 square feet. The density of the sixth small garden (the Levi Sculpture Garden at the Baltimore Museum of Art, located on a wooded hillside next to the museum) was one sculpture per 4,978 square feet. The density of the larger sculpture gardens ranged from one work per 3,025 square feet to one per 15,972 square feet. All of the smaller gardens were located either immediately adjacent to or in close proximity to the museums they served, while two of the three larger gardens were separated from nearby buildings by roadways. The third large sculpture garden, the Kreeger, immediately surrounded the museum, which had acted as the residence of the owners.

Stylistically, eight of the ten relied on Modernism for at least some of their formal, spatial, and material characteristics. Only the Noguchi Museum and the Levi Sculpture Garden strayed from the Modernist path, the former relying on Zen garden principles and the latter on the picturesque qualities of the wooded hillside where it was located. Five of the remaining eight gardens retained strict adherence to Modernist principles of omnidirectional space, material expression derived from conditions created by industrial society, and lack of a dominant axis. The three outliers in this regard – the Cullen Sculpture Garden in Houston, the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden and Outdoor Galleries, and the Kreeger Museum Sculpture Terrace and Garden – combined Modernism with other design tenets. In the case of Minneapolis and the Kreeger, the differing approaches remained distinct. The Minneapolis sculpture garden consists of two separate spaces – a symmetrical, classically inspired garden closest to the museum and a later geometrical but asymmetrical space farther away. (Figure 9) The Kreeger's sculpture terraces are integrated into the modular concept of Philip Johnson's Modernist house design, while the garden sculptures are placed informally around the grounds. (Figure 3) Only Noguchi, at the 1986 Cullen Sculpture Garden, attempted an integration of compatible Modernist and Asian design concepts, using freestanding walls in the manner of Mies van der Rohe to divide space while also employing curving paths that alter views as one moves through space. (Figure 8)

Size, density, and design approach affect the manner in which sculpture is displayed in the gardens and the views provided to visitors.²⁸ Of the smaller sculpture gardens comparable to the Hirshhorn, only those of the Oakland Museum of California and the Dallas Museum of Art – both with Dan Kiley having been involved in their design – focused attention on individual works or small groupings of sculpture. Most other spaces included both views of individual works (in the round as well as head on) and overlapping views that encompassed multiple works. Continuous spaces with fewer screening devices, such as walls or plantings, created more overlapping views, and the density of the works and size of the spaces influenced the type of views on offer as well. Not surprisingly, smaller, denser spaces, especially those small enough to be viewed in a single glance, such as the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Sculpture Garden at MOMA, provided a greater percentage of overlapping views than larger, less dense spaces, like the Cullen in Houston. Changes in elevation also affect viewing experiences. The multi-level

²⁸ The impressions conveyed in this paragraph are based on plans and photographs of the gardens reviewed during research for the study, rather than on on-site experience. The conclusions should therefore be viewed with some caution.

Wurtzburger garden, for example, offers relatively few overlapping views, despite its small size and comparatively dense concentration of art works.

The Accessibility Movement

The redesign of the Hirshhorn Sculpture Garden took place in the context of the evolution of United States government policy with regard to Americans with disabilities. The Architectural Barriers Act of 1968 had been the first effort to ensure access for all Americans to federal facilities, or those paid for with federal money. Inconsistent implementation of the act, however, led to amendments and subsequent new laws, including the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.²⁹

The implementation of the 1973 legislation provided the impetus for the inclusion of accessible ramps at the Hirshhorn Sculpture Garden, as well as other Smithsonian museums at this time. “No otherwise qualified handicapped individual in the United States,” Section 504 of the act read, “shall, solely by reason of his handicap, be excluded from participation in, or be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.”³⁰ The language was modeled on the 1964 Civil Rights Act, and affected citizens employed many of the strategies used by civil rights activists to achieve the legislation’s goals. After David Matthews, the secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) for President Gerald Ford, delayed signing regulations implementing the act under pressure from federal agencies concerned about its cost, Joseph Califano, President Jimmy Carter’s HEW secretary, suggested revised regulations to allow more waivers. Activists responded by organizing strikes in several major cities. The largest took place in San Francisco and in Washington, where protestors occupied Califano’s office for twenty-eight hours. Califano signed the regulations, without the revisions he had previously backed, on April 28, 1977. “Enforceable accessibility requirements” were issued for the first time that same year.³¹

Even after this time, however, the regulations were unevenly enforced, and there was confusion among the architects that designed the interventions, given different timelines for different types of buildings and the difficulties of interpreting details of the legislative language. Ronald L. Mace, an architect confined to a wheelchair by childhood polio, produced a guide to accessible design that would fulfill the North Carolina building code in 1973, using illustrations to suggest options to builders and designers. Many of these solutions, such as options for ramps leading from sidewalk to street and handicapped parking spaces, remain in use today. Mace’s influential publication underwent continuous revision to reflect amendments to the state code, practical interpretations of its language, advances in design and materials, and other variables. Ultimately, however, the requirements of the legislation brought about physical changes to spaces encountered in everyday life, on college campuses, in museums, monuments, government buildings, and other locations.³²

Like other organizations receiving federal financing, the Smithsonian Institution found itself confronting design issues related to accessibility for which a conventional set of solutions had not yet been agreed

²⁹ United States Access Board, “Laws Concerning the Access Board,” Access Board website, <https://www.access-board.gov/the-board/laws>, accessed October 21, 2019.

³⁰ Quoted in Bess Williamson, *Accessible America: A History of Disability and Design* (New York: New York University Press, 2019), 130.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 129-132.

³² *Ibid.*, 147-164.

upon. And, of course, the institution administered multiple buildings – historic, recent, and under construction – as the drive for accessibility developed. In a review of the Hirshhorn Sculpture Garden redesign at the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts in November 1977, Lester Collins stated that he was spending much of his time trying to fit ramps into Washington’s classical buildings,³³ and it seems likely that such work was going on across the federal city. Surveys of accessible design projects – either in Washington or in the nation – were not, however, discovered in research for this study. The design context for the Hirshhorn Sculpture Garden, therefore, has not yet been established, or would require a far greater research effort than is possible for this report.

Lester Collins, Landscape Architect

Lester Albertson Collins was one of five children born to Lester and Ann Collins. (Figure 10) He grew up in Moorestown, in western New Jersey, where his father was a fruit grower and his grandfather a farmer, nurseryman, and founder of the New Jersey Horticultural Society. The family also owned land in Miami, Florida, which they farmed and developed. The family financed the Collins Canal and Collins Bridge that linked Miami and Miami Beach. Collins attended Princeton for a year before moving on to Harvard, where he received his bachelor’s degree in English in 1938. His undergraduate thesis was titled “Actors in the picturesque; a study of the picturesque in eighteenth-century England with special reference to the relationship between the informal garden and the stage.”³⁴



Figure 10 – Lester Collins in the mid-1970s. (Collins Family, The Cultural Landscape Foundation)

³³ U.S. Commission of Fine Arts, Transcript of Meeting, November 22, 1977, U.S. Commission of Fine Arts Archives, 57.

³⁴ Nancy Slade, “Collins, Lester Albertson (1914-1993),” in *Shaping the American Landscape*, Birnbaum, Charles A., and Stephanie S. Foell, editors (Charlottesville, Virginia: University of Virginia Press, 2009), 56; Lester A. Collins, “Actors in the picturesque; a study of the picturesque in eighteenth-century England with special reference to the relationship between the informal garden and the stage,” Harvard University Library Catalog, Dumbarton Oaks Archives and Library website, https://hollis.harvard.edu/primo-explore/fulldisplay?docid=01HVD_ALMA211856635740003941&context=L&vid=HVD2&lang=en_US&search_scope=default_scope&adaptor=Local%20Search%20Engine&tab=books&query=any,contains,collins,%20lester%20a&offset=0, accessed October 18, 2019.



Figure 11 – Scroll paintings of the eighth-century garden of Wang Wei, like this one from the eighteenth century, convinced artist Walter Beck to follow Chinese precedents for his garden at Innisfree. (“Wangchuan Villa,” Metropolitan Museum of Art, <https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/1977.80>)

Collins met Walter and Marion Beck at the Grace Boynton Chinese Garden Lectures at Harvard in February 1938 and visited their estate, called Innisfree, in Millbrook, New York, in the spring – the start of a relationship with that landscape that lasted for the rest of his life. He traveled with his Harvard friend John Ormsbee Simonds to China, Japan, India, and Tibet in 1939 and 1940, returning to Harvard to study for his master’s degree in landscape architecture in the Graduate School of Design from 1940 to 1942. During World War II, he served in North Africa as a captain in the American Field Service, returning to Harvard after the war to serve as an instructor in the Landscape Architecture Department. He became dean in 1950.³⁵

The period that included Collins’s meeting with the Becks in 1938, his travels, and his graduate education at Harvard had profound effects on his understanding of landscape and his future career as a landscape architect. Already interested in Chinese gardens, as evidenced by his attendance at the Boynton lectures, he began his firsthand experience in using Chinese and Japanese gardening techniques when he became involved at Innisfree. Walter Beck had determined to change the English garden he and Marion had started at Innisfree, a 950-acre estate that she owned when the couple married in 1922, to one modeled on Chinese precedents. Beck, a painter, had discovered references to the garden of eighth-century bureaucrat, politician, poet, painter, calligrapher, and garden builder Wang Wei while pondering alterations to Innisfree’s garden. He subsequently studied scroll paintings of the no longer extant landscape, known as Wangchuan, and determined to follow its example. (Figure 11) Collins studied scroll paintings of the garden himself, and his travels reinforced his knowledge of Chinese, as well as Japanese and other Asian, gardening techniques.³⁶

Collins received his education in Modernism at the Harvard GSD, where former Bauhaus architect Walter Gropius and Christopher Tunnard, author of the influential *Gardens in the Modern Landscape* (1938), both taught. It was just at this time that students in landscape architecture at Harvard began clamoring for Modernism to be taught in the landscape department, which, in the late 1930s, still clung to Beaux Arts principles. Gropius and Tunnard inspired landscape students Dan Kiley, Garrett Eckbo, and

³⁵ Lester Collins, *Innisfree: An American Garden* (New York: Sagapress/Harry N. Abrams, 1994), 7; Slade, 56.

³⁶ Slade, 56; Collins, *Innisfree: An American Garden*, 5, 11.

James Rose, who were at Harvard while Collins traveled in Asia (and who were of the same generation). The trio published three articles on Modernism in landscape design in the *Architectural Record* between 1939 and 1941.³⁷ At Harvard, Collins came to know a generation of American landscape architecture who, following Modern architects, “used new materials and techniques, used plantings to integrate interior and exterior spaces, focused on the particularities of the site, demonstrated an interest in Eastern thought and design process, and blended traditional methods with modern forms.”³⁸

In addition to advancing his own education at Harvard, as dean Collins helped create a hands-on learning experience for landscape architecture students when he contributed significantly to the founding of the Field Laboratory in Weston, Massachusetts, where students could construct small-scale designs and watch their impacts on the landscape and how they matured and changed over time. While at Harvard, he also taught Richard Haag, whom he encouraged to apply for a Fulbright Fellowship, Robert Zion, Howard Breen, and Ian McHarg, who would all become important landscape architects of the generation after Collins, Kiley, Eckbo, Rose, and Lawrence Halprin.³⁹

After leaving the deanship at Harvard in 1953, Collins traveled to Kyoto, Japan, on a Fulbright scholarship. He also traveled in South Africa and China on the trip. While in Kyoto, he became interested in a twelfth-century Japanese garden book, *Sensai Hisho* (later called *Sakuteiki*) which is usually translated as *Secret Garden Book*. The work covered the period in which Chinese gardening techniques were introduced in Japan. Collins worked with a Japanese scholar on a translation of the book, which contained practical instructions for designing and building gardens, into English. Returning to the United States in 1954, he moved his family to Washington, D.C., lecturing in the landscape studies program at Dumbarton Oaks under Harvard’s auspices. It was also in Washington that Collins became a fulltime practicing landscape architect, forming a partnership with his traveling companion, John Ormsbee Simonds, and Simonds’s brother Philip in 1955. The Simonds brothers worked out of offices in Pittsburgh, while Collins appears to have worked from his home in Washington for at least part of this period.⁴⁰

Collins’s practice was large and various. He developed numerous designs for the small back gardens of townhouses in Georgetown, where he lived. For one client there, he used an angular path to reach a maze with illuminated fountains. For Washington architect Waldron Faulkner and his wife Elizabeth, he created a miniature version of the seven hills of Rome, the city where the couple had met. For a Falls Church client, he designed a Chinese garden, with a pond at its base, hills and trees at the perimeter.

³⁷ Peter Walker and Melanie Simo, *Invisible Gardens: The Search for Modernism in the American Landscape* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2002), 116-118; Marc Treib, “Axioms for a Modern Landscape Architecture,” *Modern Landscape Architecture: A Critical Review*, Marc Treib, editor (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1993), 36-40.

³⁸ Kate Kerin and Jean Phifer, Innisfree Foundation, National Register of Historic Places Registration Form: Innisfree. U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Washington, D.C., received July 18, 2018, 8:63.

³⁹ Kerin and Phifer, 8:43, 8:64-65.

⁴⁰ Slade, 56-58; Correspondence between Sharon Park, Smithsonian Institution, AHHP, Elizabeth Ratigan, Kiplinger Research Library, Historical Society of Washington, and the authors (electronic mail), December 5-10, 2019. At a request from Sharon Park, Ms. Ratigan reviewed information in social registers and city directories regarding Collins’s place of business. Two volumes of Polk’s city directories for Washington (1965 and 1967) placed the office of Collins, Simonds & Simonds at Collins’s home address in Georgetown.

This was a version of what Walter Beck called a “cup” garden, designed to be seen vertically, as well as horizontally, with hills, rocks, and vegetation to enclose or “cup” the garden space.⁴¹

Collins worked with many of the prominent architects of the day, both locally and nationally. In 1961, with Waldron Faulkner of Faulkner, Kingsbury and Stenhouse, he designed the plaza and plantings for Federal Office Building No. 6, the U.S. Department of Education Headquarters at 400 Maryland Avenue SW. Collins’s Modernist design featured a paved plaza, with trees planted in square voids in the pavement, and a sunken court that provided outdoor space and light for basement level offices. The building and landscape were added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2017 and recorded by the Historic American Building Survey before Collins’s work was demolished to make way for the Dwight D. Eisenhower Memorial.⁴² Collins teamed with the architecture firm Faulkner, Fryer and Vanderpool, of which Waldron Faulkner’s son, Avery, was a partner, for the master plan of the National Zoological Park, beginning in 1972. Collins was also responsible for the landscaping of the giant panda exhibit, necessitated by China’s gift of Ling-Ling and Hsing-Hsing to the United States.⁴³

Among the nationally and internationally recognized architects and landscape architects with whom he collaborated were Gropius, at the Michael Reese Hospital in Chicago in 1953; Edward Durell Stone and his son, landscape architect Edward Durell Stone, Jr., at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts; and postmodern architect Charles W. Moore on several residential commissions over a number of years.⁴⁴ For the Enid Haupt Garden south of the Smithsonian Castle, Collins “collaborated with the Smithsonian Office of Horticulture to prepare planting plans” for the space, actually a roof garden for the Smithsonian’s Quadrangle project that opened in 1987. The landscape architect of record for the Haupt Garden was Sasaki Associates.⁴⁵ With Cesar Pelli, then of Daniel, Mann, Jackson, Mendenhall (DMJM), he assisted in the building siting and designed the landscape for COMSAT Laboratories in Clarksburg, Maryland, in the late 1960s. Pelli’s concept for this early example of High Tech design centered on the idea of the “machine in the garden,” in which the building is understood as completely different from the landscape in character, yet inextricably bound to it. Collins helped place the building in the midst of existing woodland so that the forested landscape would virtually become part of the High Tech design itself.⁴⁶

In addition, he developed planting plans for numerous universities in the Washington area, including George Washington, American, and Gallaudet, as well as the U.S. Naval Academy and Virginia Military Institute. He prepared designs for the grounds of the U.S. ambassador’s residence in Cairo, Egypt, twenty-nine small parks along Pennsylvania Avenue SE for the National Park Service, three city squares in Savannah, Georgia, and Market Square in Alexandria, Virginia. He completed public and private

⁴¹ Patricia Dane Rogers, “Appreciation: Even Mother Nature Bowed to Lester Collins,” *Washington Post*, July 29, 1993, T 10.

⁴² Kimberly DeMuro and Bill Marzella, EHT Traceries, National Register of Historic Places Registration Form: Federal Office Building No. 6, Department of the Interior, National Park Service, May 8, 2017, 8:17.

⁴³ Slade, 56; Kerin and Phifer, 8:71.

⁴⁴ Kerin and Phifer, 8:68-69.

⁴⁵ EHT Traceries, Inc., SurfaceDesign, Inc., and BIG Architecture, “Smithsonian Institution South Mall Campus Cultural Landscape Report,” prepared for the Smithsonian Institution, February 2018, 118-119.

⁴⁶ Isabelle Gournay, and Mary Corbin Sies, Maryland Inventory of Historic Places no. M:13-59 – COMSAT Laboratories, Maryland Historical Trust, Medusa: Maryland’s Cultural Resource Information System website, <https://mht.maryland.gov/secure/medusa/PDF/Montgomery/M%3B%2013-59.pdf>, accessed August 8, 2019, 7:1.

commissions for clients from Maine to Florida. The American Society of Landscape Architects elected him a Fellow in 1964.⁴⁷

Collins's career as a landscape architect can perhaps be broken down into three overlapping phases. From 1945 to 1954, he was an academic, serving as an instructor at Harvard, then as dean, studying in Kyoto as a Fulbright Scholar, helping to translate the twelfth-century Japanese garden book, *Sensai Hisho*, and lecturing at Dumbarton Oaks. Toward the end of this period, he became a practicing landscape architect, working with Gropius in 1953 and the Simonds brothers beginning in 1955. For the next fifteen years, Collins was a partner in the full-service landscape architecture firm of Collins, Simonds and Simonds from his home in Washington. It was through this partnership that Collins collaborated with local architecture firms such as Faulkner, Kingsbury and Stenhouse and large, internationally known firms, including the Los Angeles-based Daniel, Mann, Jackson, Mendenhall (DMJM). With Collins, Simonds and Simonds, he helped shape private, civic, and commercial landscapes up and down the east coast. Little research has been undertaken into the workings of the Washington office of Collins, Simonds and Simonds during this period, but correspondence of the firm, as well as Collins's letters and drawings for at least one project (the plaza associated with Federal Office Building No. 6) are held in the collection of John Ormsbee Simonds's papers at the University of Florida.⁴⁸

In 1970, the third and final phase of Collins's career began when he withdrew from his partnership with the Simonds brothers. Still working out of his house in Georgetown, Collins accepted residential commissions in his own neighborhood and worked with nationally recognized architects such as Charles W. Moore and Hugh Newell Jacobsen in Washington, Maryland, New York, and Connecticut. He also continued his institutional work; the Smithsonian hired him for four projects. He maintained his relationship with Innisfree, the foundation of which he was president, and Miami Lakes, consulting with the successor firm to Collins, Simonds and Simonds for the latter. Collins's services during this period varied widely. He frequently acted as a consultant, concentrating on selection and location of plantings, as he did in the master planning work at the National Zoo and in the design of the Enid Haupt Garden in the late 1980s and in some of his campus and civic projects. He also, however, undertook responsibility for both the design and execution of many projects during this time, including the Podium at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, the courtyard at the National Collection of Fine Arts (now the Smithsonian American Art Museum in the Old Patent Office), and several residential commissions.⁴⁹

Collins seems not to have provided construction drawings during this period. Stephen Zipp, an architect at Wilkes and Faulkner in Washington in the 1970s, did not recall seeing drawings by Collins for residential work in the city, although in these circumstances the landscape architect was hired by the homeowner separately from the architects. Zipp assumed that, even if he had not seen drawings, Collins must have shown the owner some representation of his proposed design and that the landscape

⁴⁷ Slade, 57-59.

⁴⁸ Kimberly DeMuro and Bill Marzella, EHT Traceries, National Register of Historic Places Registration Form: Federal Office Building No. 6. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, n.d., 8:18. Some sources begin the collaboration between Collins and the Simonds brothers in 1953. The beginning date for correspondence related to the firm in the John Ormsbee Simonds Papers at the University of Florida is 1953, according to the collection's finding aid.

⁴⁹ "Lester Albertson Collins," Fellows File, American Society of Landscape Architects, Council of Fellows, courtesy Ian C. Bucacink, Archivist and Technical Librarian, American Society of Landscape Architects, provided to Sharon Park.

contractor would have needed a design on paper to work from.⁵⁰ In collaborations with architects, Collins would rely on their capabilities for construction drawings. His work with Centerbrook Architects and Planners, the successor to Charles W. Moore's firm, which began collaborating with Collins in 1978, represented an extreme example of this practice. Principal Mark Simon recalled that the landscape architect would give verbal instructions to Centerbrook staff, who then produced sketches for the design.⁵¹

His work at the Hirshhorn is an example of a more formal approach. Collins provided at least one finished concept plan as well as sketches that the Smithsonian facilities office and the architecture and engineering firm E/A Design Group turned into presentation and construction drawings. This was not an unusual situation for landscape architects, as can be seen in the design of other sculpture gardens discussed earlier. Dan Kiley, for instance, provided the layout for the terraces at the Oakland Museum of California, while Roche Dinkeloo handled the details, and Isamu Noguchi turned to architect and frequent collaborator Shoji Sadao for similar services at the Cullen Sculpture Garden in Houston. Lester Collins's son Oliver has stated that his father did not provide construction drawings in these situations because draftsmen in an architect's office could do so at a much lower cost.⁵² For the Smithsonian, Kiley provided plans for the Victorian Garden south of the Castle in 1975, which the Office of Horticulture then altered and implemented without the landscape architect's participation.⁵³

A detailed consideration of Collins's complete works has not been undertaken, nor has an assessment of the number and integrity of his extant works. Three works most often mentioned in available literature as his most important are the town plan of Miami Lakes, Florida, his collaboration with Walter and Marion Beck and subsequent independent work at Innisfree, and the Hirshhorn Sculpture Garden.⁵⁴ Miami Lakes was conceived as part of the "new town" movement that began in England after World War II. The movement advocated creating new towns from master plans that would guide location of residential, commercial, governmental, and community uses in a rational manner. Such an approach would relieve, so its supporters thought, the ills of enormous metropolises and the unplanned growth of suburbs. As with other new towns, the conception for Miami Lakes sought a complete community (of 22,000 people), where all the typical needs of its residents were prepared for in advance. The Miami Lakes design included extensive open space and greenways, curvilinear streets rather than the traditional grid, a network of artificial lakes, and conservation of natural resources. Collins continued to

⁵⁰ Stephen Zipp, former architect with Wilkes & Faulkner, correspondence with Sharon Park (electronic mail), November 3, 2019.

⁵¹ Mark Simon, Principal, Centerbrook Architects and Planners, to Sharon Park (electronic mail), December 4, 2019.

⁵² Kerin and Phifer, 8:69.

⁵³ EHT Traceries, Inc., SurfaceDesign, Inc., and BIG Architecture, "Smithsonian Institution South Mall Campus Cultural Landscape Report," prepared for the Smithsonian Institution, February 2018, 104-109.

⁵⁴ The authors surveyed a range of sources in compiling information on Collins's career. These included obituaries and appreciations published after his death in 1993, National Register of Historic Places nominations and Historic American Landscape documentation for three properties with which he is associated, the entries in the two volumes of The Cultural Landscape Foundation's *Pioneers* series in which he appears, his "fellows file" at ASLA, and other reviews of his work in newspapers and journals. In the nine publications that surveyed Collins's work, the town plan for Miami Lakes is mentioned as significant in all nine, the Hirshhorn and Innisfree in eight each. The individual works with the next highest numbers of mentions are the Enid Haupt Garden, the National Zoo master plan, and the landscape of the U.S. ambassador's residence in Cairo, with three each.

work at Miami Lakes for many years. The town plan is considered one of the precursors of the New Urbanism, which was also connected to development in Florida.⁵⁵

According to Patricia Dane Rogers, in an appreciation of the landscape architect after his death, Collins considered Miami Lakes his magnum opus.⁵⁶ Collins himself wrote that the Hirshhorn and Miami Lakes were his “most visible public projects,” but considered Innisfree to be his most important. As mentioned previously he became involved at Innisfree in 1938 as an undergraduate at Harvard. He kept in touch with the Becks during his travels, his education, and his military service, and provided Walter Beck with a copy of his translation of the *Secret Garden Book* in the last years of the artist’s life. Collins’s serious engagement with the site began after Beck’s death in 1954, when Marion asked him to help continue planning and implementing the garden, which he did until her death in 1959. Marion’s will provided for an Innisfree Foundation, the trustees of which were to establish a charitable and educational trust and open the property to the public. Collins became president of the foundation in 1960, responsible for its planning, maintenance, further development, and finances.⁵⁷

The Becks had worked on developing the garden for a quarter of a century, Walter handling design while Marion, who possessed extensive botanical knowledge, provided plant suggestions appropriate to her husband’s ideas. The site, which had been farmland, included a large lake with cliffs at its edge, groves of hemlocks, pine, and oak, as well as birches and dogwood. It also included “gently enclosing hills,” according to Collins – less rugged than the villa gardens of China, but appropriate to the approach used by Wang Wei and other Chinese gardeners of creating individual landscape pictures, in which physical features (a cliff, outcroppings of rock, or hills) and plantings enclosed the vignettes “like the sides of a cup,” leading Beck to the term “cup garden” for the vignettes he created.⁵⁸ These cup gardens “serve the same purpose as an axis, riveting your attention on one eloquent bit of nature.”⁵⁹

Chinese gardens of the type pioneered by Wang Wei and developed over centuries employed rocks and water as their structural materials, along with architectural features, according to Maggie Keswick, who wrote an influential book on the subject, *The Chinese Garden: History, Art and Architecture*. Gardeners used trees, shrubs, and flowers to layer the spaces they created.⁶⁰ As part of this practice, Chinese gardens often included weathered or river-worn rocks, placed like statuary, as central garden features. Walter Beck found and placed rocks in his cup gardens when opportunities presented themselves, building “three-dimensional pictures of stone and water,” whether an arrangement of stones near the lake (Figure 12), a single vertical stone in a carpet of grass, or a “lip fall” of water sliding over a cliff’s edge.⁶¹

Another significant aspect of Chinese landscape design is the journey through the garden. The goal of the Chinese gardener, Keswick wrote, was to “unfold a series of linked views around the visitor as he strolls along [the garden’s] three-dimensional paths . . . [T]o make the most of each successive vista the

⁵⁵ Slade, 58; Kerin and Phiher, 8:70-71.

⁵⁶ Rogers, “Appreciation,” T 10.

⁵⁷ Collins, *Innisfree: An American Garden*, 7-8.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 5-6.

⁵⁹ Tovah Martin, “Idylls of Innisfree,” *Landscape Architecture Magazine* 97, no. 11 (November 2007), 75.

⁶⁰ Maggie Keswick, “China,” in *The Oxford Companion to Gardens*, Sir Jeffrey and Susan Jellicoe, editors (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 115.

⁶¹ Anne Raver, “Garden Notebook: In Mystical Innisfree,” *New York Times*, September 1, 1994.



Figure 12 – Dragon Rock near the lake at Innisfree Garden. (Innisfree Garden, innisfreegarden.org)

garden-maker creates a labyrinth, in which available space is layered by gateways and subdivided by walls that wind among the trees and rocks . . . Each garden is a composition of courtyards, some large, some small, some disappearing around corners, some open-ended, some cul-de-sacs, some fitted together like the pieces of a puzzle. And the visitor is led on through them . . . by the constant suggestion of something new and delightful half revealed through the latticed windows . . . or above the walls . . . of the next enclosure.”⁶² Collins appreciated the difference between this approach and traditional Western landscape design philosophy. “Western gardens are usually designed to embrace a view of the whole,” he wrote. “Little is hidden. The garden, like a stage set, is there in its entirety, its overall design revealed in a glance. . . . The Chinese garden is usually designed so that a view of the whole is impossible. . . . The observer walks into a series of episodes, like Alice through the looking glass.”⁶³ (Figure 13)

Beck had not followed this directive at Innisfree. “He did not grasp, or was not interested in, the overall cup garden concept,” Collins wrote, “the design from horizon to horizon that brought the sky into the picture.”⁶⁴ With Innisfree being opened to the public after Marion Beck’s death, the task fell to Collins to

⁶² Maggie Keswick, “China,” in *The Oxford Companion to Gardens*, Sir Jeffrey and Susan Jellicoe, editors (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 115.

⁶³ Collins, *Innisfree: An American Garden*, 16.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 5-6.



Figure 13 – At Innisfree, Walter Beck and Lester Collins created three-dimensional cup gardens that drew visitors through the space. (The Cultural Landscape Foundation, <https://tclf.org/landscapes/innisfree-garden>)

create that linkage. To accomplish it, he extended existing path systems, “exposed land shapes by thinning out undergrowth,” and developed new cup gardens as links in the pictorial chain. This included dredging a section of the lake that exposed a granite cliff and using the dredged material to create a small island that he planted with pollarded weeping willows. He developed a bog cup garden along one of the new walks, planted with grasses and irises. The Meadow garden, a large area linked to others by a network of walks, could not be finished until the trustees stabilized Innisfree’s finances under Collins’s leadership, which included selling 750 acres of the property, reducing staff, and demolishing the Becks’ Queen Anne-style house to save the cost of its maintenance. Once that was accomplished, Collins planted groves of pear trees and swamp magnolias, cut a stream through the Meadow that featured both wide, calm, reflective sections and narrower, more swiftly moving sections, and planted a hillside bank of daffodils and sweetpeas. He also placed a berm over the house site and flanked it with ginkgo trees. He built a vined pergola on the terrace between the house site and the garden and used trees as sculptural features – purple smoke trees, weeping copper beeches, a Japanese threadleaf maple tree, and a horizontally growing blue spruce. Collins continued to develop Innisfree throughout the forty years he worked there on a regular basis. After becoming president of the foundation, Collins and his wife Petronella spent part of each summer in a cottage at the garden, vacationing and working at the same time. When Collins died in 1993, he had begun planning another extension to the garden.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ Ibid., 33-39.

Japanese gardening, with which Collins was also familiar, as indicated by his time in Kyoto and his translation of the *Sensai Hisho*, shares with Chinese gardening the hide-and-reveal tactic discussed by Keswick and Collins. Scholars generally consider that these ideas came to Japan through China, there to be developed and adapted to Japanese topography, geology, and plant materials, as well as to its religious and cultural traditions. Garden composition within the two kingdoms developed in parallel and in dialogue across centuries, with linked cup gardens reaching their zenith in China in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, according to Collins, while the parallel Japanese “stroll garden” blossomed in the Edo period of the seventeenth century through the middle of the nineteenth century. Collins consistently refers to Chinese precedents as inspirations for the cup gardens and their linkage at Innisfree, although he does credit the *Sensai Hisho* with practical information on the construction of waterfalls, which he and Beck both enjoyed building.⁶⁶

Collins’ work at Innisfree went beyond the sculpting of a large garden based on Asian gardening principles. The gardens he managed and created merged the practical with the aesthetic. Several of his hydraulic interventions – such as bog garden, the reworking of the water course, and establishment of an overflow waterfall – successfully managed water flow and water availability issues without major engineering efforts, and he rid the lake of algae with natural and mechanical, rather than industrial, processes. He also continued a plant-hybridizing program started by Marion Beck, altering it to create “ecotypes” – slight variations on plant species created through hand pollination – that suited the Innisfree environment. The approach resulted in naturally generated, resilient, low-maintenance plant communities that also achieved the aesthetic effects he sought in a cost-effective manner.⁶⁷

The architects with whom Collins collaborated praised his work as a landscape architect. “I always thought he was the best,” said Georgetown resident Hugh Newell Jacobsen, a fellow of the American Institute of Architects and winner of the Washington, D.C., AIA chapter Centennial Award. Mark Simon, who worked with Collins first at Charles Moore’s firm before becoming a principal of Centerbrook Architects, called him “the most important and unsung landscape architect of the late twentieth century.”⁶⁸ Moore, an American Institute of Architects Gold Medalist who worked with Collins for a number of years in the latter part of his career, agreed to write the introduction to the landscape architect’s book on Innisfree “because I have so admired Collins’s work.” Of Innisfree, Moore wrote that “Collins planned the garden so that you will have this experience of being lifted out of your ordinary reality, not by an abstraction, but by a new reality, gently felt.” Of his abilities as a collaborator and the accomplishments of his career, Moore said that Collins “always offered a genuine response to the problems facing designers. His answers were based on real people and how they move and interact with the environment. He even had some handle on the question which we often forget while busily supplying the answers: how do we shape the human environment to foster the good things shared by people of all cultures – peace, awareness, beauty?”⁶⁹

Although Collins was elected a fellow of the American Society of Landscape Architects ten years into his practice, research for this study did not uncover any awards he won either for individual projects or for

⁶⁶ Collins, *Innisfree: An American Garden*, 13-18; Marc Treib and Ron Herman, *A Guide to the Gardens of Kyoto* (Tokyo: Shufunotomo Company, 1993), 16-18.

⁶⁷ Kerin and Phifer, 8:44-45, 8:58-61.

⁶⁸ Rogers, “Appreciation,” T 10.

⁶⁹ Charles W. Moore, “Introduction,” in *Innisfree: An American Garden*, by Lester Collins, xi, xiii.

career accomplishments. Innisfree is cited, however, in various publications as one of the top gardens in the United States.⁷⁰ Unlike other landscape architects of his generation, such as Kiley, Eckbo, Rose, and Halprin, Collins's career has not been the subject of a wide range of scholarly study, the most substantial being the entries by former National Park Service and current landscape historian for The Cultural Landscape Foundation Nancy Slade, written for *Shaping the American Landscape* and *Shaping the Postwar Landscape* in *Pioneers of American Landscape* series. The National Register nomination for Innisfree also takes a broad look at his career, as well as a deeper investigation of his work for the Becks and the Innisfree Foundation.

The *Shaping the American Landscape* and *Shaping the Postwar Landscape* entries were published in 2009 and 2018, respectively. Clare Lise Kelly, in her 2015 book, *Montgomery Modern*, notes that Collins was called "Washington's finest landscape architect" in 1970 and documents his work in Montgomery County with Pelli and Jacobsen.⁷¹ His design for the plaza at the Department of Education building on Maryland Avenue SW, completed in 1961, was considered to contribute to the significance of that building, and Collins was recognized as a master landscape architect when Federal Office Building No. 6 was placed on the National Register in May 2017. The National Register nomination for Innisfree, also identifying Collins as a master landscape architect, was accepted by the Keeper of the National Register on September 3, 2019.⁷² Its period of significance was determined to extend from circa 1930 to 1994, the end date having been chosen to reflect the completion of the last element Collins designed for the garden. The nomination also found that the design of Innisfree satisfied Criteria Consideration G for properties either less than fifty years old or properties the period of significance of which falls within the fifty-year limit.⁷³ His work was deemed important in the D.C. Inventory of Historic Sites Determination of Eligibility for the Smithsonian's Quadrangle Historic District, which was accepted on April 27, 2017. The nomination states that Collins "designed the [Quadrangle] garden's plantings and played a major role in the implementing the planting plan over a five-year period" and concludes that Collins's work at the Quad satisfied D.C. Designation Criterion F for "Creative Masters."⁷⁴

⁷⁰ It should be noted, however, that several of the residential projects for which Collins created landscape designs did win awards. Among these are at least three with Hugh Newell Jacobsen that were also written up in newspapers and journals, including *Progressive Architecture*. It is not known whether the awards acknowledged Collins's contributions. (See Massimo Vignelli, editor, *Hugh Newell Jacobsen, Architect*, Washington, D.C.: American Institute of Architects Press, 1988, 14, 42, 318, 324).

⁷¹ Clare Lise Kelly, *Montgomery Modern: Modern Architecture in Montgomery County, Maryland, 1930-1979* (Silver Spring, Maryland: Maryland-National Capital Planning Commission, 2015), 180.

⁷² "Weekly List 20190906," National Register of Historic Places website, <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/weekly-list-20190906.htm>, accessed November 7, 2019.

⁷³ Kerin and Phifer, 7:3, 8:44-47.

⁷⁴ D.P. Sefton, and Richard Longstreth. D.C. Inventory of Historic Sites Application for Historic Landmark Status: Smithsonian Quadrangle Historic District, April 27, 2017, 8:19; Historic Preservation Review Board Staff Report, Case no. 17-04, Smithsonian Quadrangle Historic District, April 27, 2017, 6.

Chronology of Design and Construction

The Hirshhorn Sculpture Garden in the Design of Gordon Bunshaft, 1974

Prior to the establishment of the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Joseph H. Hirshhorn displayed approximately 144 sculptures (of the 2,500 in his collection) outdoors on the grounds of his 22-acre estate in Greenwich, Connecticut, known as Round Hill. Both the financier and Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution J. Dillon Ripley stipulated, as part of the negotiations for the donation, that a sculpture garden be part of the complex that would house Hirshhorn's collection of modern and contemporary art in Washington so that such outdoor display could continue.⁷⁵ The establishing legislation passed by Congress on November 7, 1966, gave that stipulation the force of law. The act states that the area bounded by Seventh Street, Jefferson Drive, Ninth Street, and Madison Drive "is hereby made available to the Smithsonian Institution as the permanent site of a sculpture garden" for the display of works in the collection of the museum.⁷⁶ As the number of artworks in the collection has always been greater than the space available for its display, the Hirshhorn has, from its opening to the present, rotated the works exhibited, both in the museum itself and in the sculpture garden.

The Hirshhorn was designed, approved, and built during a period in which the Smithsonian expanded its collections and embraced Modern architecture for its new buildings on the National Mall. The museum



Figure 14 – Bunshaft's original design for the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden included a sunken garden that crossed the National Mall along the Eighth Street axis, following the Mall master plan created by SOM. (Smithsonian Institution Archives)

⁷⁵ James A. Demetrian, "Introduction," in *A Garden for Art: Outdoor Sculpture at the Hirshhorn Museum* by Valerie J. Fletcher (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1998), 9, 12, 30 n. 2.

⁷⁶ Public Law 89-788, An Act to provide for the establishment of the Joseph H. Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden and for other purposes, 80 Stat. 1403.

and sculpture garden, designed by architect Gordon Bunshaft of the New York firm Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill (SOM), based on Ripley's suggestion of a circular-plan museum,⁷⁷ exemplifies these twin movements and reflects the battle the Smithsonian and advocates of contemporary architecture fought against supporters of traditional design in Washington. The sculpture garden was one of the battlegrounds in that fight, with Bunshaft's initial plan for a sunken, north-south exhibit space crossing the National Mall along the Eighth Street axis (suggested by SOM's master plan for the Mall) one of its casualties. (Figure 14) The resolution to the struggle took the form of the proposal by *Washington Star* art critic Benjamin Forgey that, rather than crossing the Mall, the sculpture garden could be placed within the tree panel north of the museum at the Mall's southern edge, lowered below ground level but maintaining the forms of contemporary landscape architecture. The Smithsonian accepted this idea, and Bunshaft designed the smaller garden based on Forgey's suggested location. The new design received approval from the National Capital Planning Commission in the summer of 1971.⁷⁸

An additional influence on the final appearance of the museum and sculpture garden was funding. The design approved by the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts employed travertine for the exterior of the museum, but funding issues led to the substitution of concrete with an aggregate of Swenson pink granite. That same concrete mixture was used for the freestanding, boundary, and retaining walls of the plaza and sculpture garden.⁷⁹

The reduced sculpture garden measured 360 feet east to west (the same width as the museum plaza) and 140 feet north to south, creating a 1.3-acre display space. Bunshaft's design for the garden consisted of three levels. (Figure 15) The street level included two rows of American elms (*Ulmus americana*) on the east and west edges, outside the garden's concrete boundary walls, to match those in the Mall's other tree panels. Stair landings at the center of both the north and south sides of the garden and a space for an existing oak tree in the southwest corner of the site made up the rest of the street level features. The intermediate level encompassed rectangular spaces on the north, east, and west sides of the garden, depressed 7 feet below street level. Bunshaft extended the concrete retaining wall for the oak tree space to the north as a storage room with a planter above, creating a separate, open-air room at the northwest corner of the intermediate level. Symmetrical, lateral stairs on the south and a single central set of stairs on the north accessed the intermediate level from the street and from the National Mall. The nearly square lower level lay 14 feet below street level at the bottom of a pair of facing stairs on the east and west. An opening in the base of the lateral south stairs connected the lower level via a tunnel below Jefferson Drive to the museum plaza. The tunnel provided direct access between the museum plaza and the sculpture garden, without having to cross the roadway.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ Nicholas Adams, *Gordon Bunshaft and SOM: Building Corporate Modernism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), 199. Other collaborators on the design include SOM architects Sherwood A. Smith and Leon Moed. (Adams, 204)

⁷⁸ The story of the design and approval process for the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden is told in several places, including EHT Tracerics, Inc., SurfaceDesign, Inc., and BIG Architecture, "Smithsonian Institution South Mall Campus Cultural Landscape Report," prepared for the Smithsonian Institution, February 2018, and Bill Marzella, EHT Tracerics, National Register of Historic Places Registration Form: Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, n.d.

⁷⁹ National Register of Historic Places Registration Form: Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden (draft), 8:26.

⁸⁰ National Register of Historic Places Registration Form: Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden (draft), 7:7; Carole Ottesen, *A Guide to Smithsonian Gardens* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Books, 2011), 73; Skidmore,

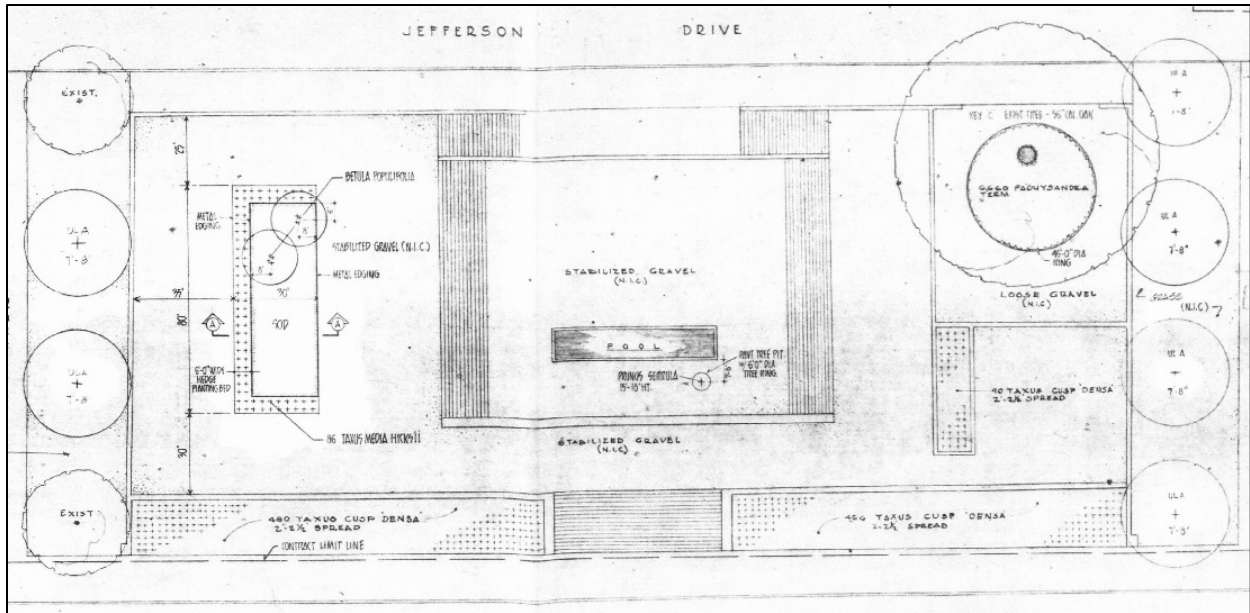


Figure 15 – Bunshaft’s design for the reduced sculpture garden covered three levels and included minimal plantings. North is at the bottom in this image. (Smithsonian Institution Archives, August 20, 1973)



Figure 16 – Bunshaft’s garden recalled the minimalism of Japanese Zen gardens. (Smithsonian Archives, 1974.)

Owings & Merrill, “Sculpture Garden Plan,” drawing no. 3-7B, July 6, 1971, Smithsonian Institution Archives. Ottesen states that the garden’s lower level lies 18 feet below the street.

Like the plaza and the museum itself, the sculpture garden was an austere space that employed exposed aggregate concrete walls consistent with the entire Hirshhorn complex as well as a gravel surface treatment and granite stairs. (Figure 16) The monochrome walls and uniform ground planes were intended to form a neutral setting for sculptural display.⁸¹ Aside from an island of Japanese pachysandra (likely *Pachysandra terminalis*) planted immediately around it, loose gravel surrounded the oak in the southwest corner, and Japanese yew (*Taxus cuspidate* 'Densa') filled the planter within the concrete extension forming the northwest corner room's east wall. Japanese yew also filled the planters flanking the north stair. A second rectangle of plantings, consisting of a hedge of Anglo-Japanese yew (*Taxus media* 'Hicksii') and two gray birches (*Betula populifolia*), occupied the center of the intermediate level on the east. Although a Japanese cherry (*Prunus serrulata*) was originally specified north of the rectangular pool that formed the centerpiece of the lower level, when construction was complete, a weeping willow had been planted in that location. The pool, 60 feet east to west, 12 feet north to south, was the same width and occupied the same position across the north-south axis through the museum cylinder as the stair on the north side of the garden. The pool also related visually to the rectangular balcony window on the third floor of the museum.

The Hirshhorn exhibit staff, led by Director Abram Lerner, who had handled the works at Hirshhorn's Greenwich, Connecticut, home, placed sculpture throughout the garden, first using Styrofoam models to test locations. The combination of the depressed site of the garden, unadorned enclosing walls, uniform gravel ground plane, limited palette of materials, minimal plantings, and sculptural forms recalled Japanese Zen gardens, which employed a similar composition and narrow range of materials. Zen gardens developed as a means of facilitating meditation associated with the Ch'an sect of Buddhism, introduced into Japan from China in the twelfth century. The practice emphasized austerity, simplicity, discipline, and meditation as paths to enlightenment. Zen Buddhism influenced a type of garden making, often associated with monasteries, that simplified outdoor spaces, reduced them in size, and limited the palette to a small number of materials, most often gravel, moss, and stones held within a simple rectangular wall. The stones were intended to be suggestive, rather than referential. Early Zen gardens were designed to be viewed from a small number of positions, often from a raised veranda.⁸²

The architect may have been drawn to the Zen garden model through his work with Japanese American artist and landscape architect Isamu Noguchi. Noguchi designed spaces based on such gardens for Bunshaft's Beinecke Library at Yale (1963) and the Chase Manhattan Bank in New York (1961). A photograph exists of Bunshaft, his wife, and Noguchi at the Ryoan-ji Temple garden in Kyoto, one of the exemplars of the type.⁸³ With the use of the details of the Zen garden at the Hirshhorn, Bunshaft became the first designer to introduce Asian gardening principles into a modern sculpture garden associated with a museum or educational institution, according to the survey of such gardens prepared for this report.

Using Zen gardens as a model for the sculpture garden in this location, however, proved problematic for a number of reasons. First of all, as mentioned previously, Zen gardens were designed to be viewed from a small number of vantage points outside the garden as an aid to meditation; only monks

⁸¹ Valerie Fletcher, "The Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden," *Sculpture Review* 52, no. 1 (Spring 2003), 24.

⁸² Treib and Herman, 13-14.

⁸³ Ottesen, 75; National Register of Historic Places Registration Form: Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden (draft), 8:48-49.

practicing their religious rites were intended to move through them.⁸⁴ At the Hirshhorn, the gravel proved difficult for the unexpectedly high number of visitors circulating among the statuary, especially those using wheelchairs or strollers. In addition, visitors tracked enough loose gravel onto the stairs to create hazards for walkers as well.⁸⁵

The second major difficulty with the Zen garden approach was visitor comfort. The walled, sunken garden, with its concrete, granite, and gravel surfaces and minimal shade, trapped heat, making it extremely uncomfortable in the summer. Smithsonian officials were aware of this problem even before the garden opened in October 1974. The issue arose the previous spring when James R. Buckler, the Smithsonian's horticulturalist, later to become head of the institution's Office of Horticulture, convened the first meeting of the Horticulture Advisory Committee (HAC), an eight-member appointed group of experts called on to advise the institution on its growing number of designed landscapes. Lester Collins was a charter member of that board. The HAC considered a number of issues in the meeting, then visited the Hirshhorn site. Buckler told the committee that "possible problems with glare, heat, and poor air circulation within the enclosed walls" meant that the committee and the horticulture office would need to consider additional plantings for the museum carefully in the future. Secretary Ripley met with the committee after its site visit and urged it to "make strong recommendations regarding the Hirshhorn Garden in spite of the architect's request for few plants," according to Buckler. Ripley indicated to the HAC that the garden "was entirely too barren and inhuman."⁸⁶

A third issue with the Hirshhorn's original sculpture garden involved the display of sculpture. Whereas the curve of Bunshaft's walls limited sightlines in the ambulatory galleries of the museum building to a maximum of thirty feet,⁸⁷ the openness of the sculpture garden led to more expansive views. Hirshhorn Director of Exhibits and Design Joseph Shannon recalled that Bunshaft didn't consult with the exhibits staff during the design of the garden as the staff was just being put together, and Director Lerner spent most of his time with the Hirshhorn collection in Greenwich. The Bunshaft garden was an "open gallery," Shannon said, that was "not good for sculpture."⁸⁸ Edward Scheisser, also on the exhibits staff and later director, called the Bunshaft garden "a near disaster for the display of sculpture" due to its large open spaces and lack of backdrops for sculpture, creating overlapping views of multiple works.⁸⁹

⁸⁴ Treib and Herman, 14; Rogers, *Landscape Design*, 301-302.

⁸⁵ Stephen E. Weil, Deputy Director, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, to Phillip K. Reiss, Office of Facilities Planning & Engineering Services, June 11, 1975, Smithsonian Archives, accession 04-149, box 3.

⁸⁶ James R. Buckler, Smithsonian Institution Horticulturist, to S. Dillon Ripley, Secretary, Smithsonian Institution, Minutes of the Horticulture Advisory Committee, April 30, 1974, September 9, 1974, SI Archives, acc. no. 94-035, box 7.

⁸⁷ Marzella, 8:34-35.

⁸⁸ Interview with Joe Shannon, former Chief of Exhibition and Design, HMSG, 1975-1986, conducted by Sharon Park and Carly Bond, Smithsonian Institution, Office of Architectural History and Historic Preservation, August 16 (in person) and 19 (phone), 2019 (notes written August 19, 2019).

⁸⁹ Telephone interview with Ed Scheisser, former exhibits director, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Conducted by Sharon Park and Carly Bond, SI AHHP, August 9, 2019.

The Redesign of the Hirshhorn Sculpture Garden, 1975-1981

Early Efforts

The Smithsonian began seeking a solution to the sculpture garden's problems just months after it opened. At a May 5, 1975, meeting, Hirshhorn Director Lerner and his staff indicated a desire to hire a landscape architect to develop a master plan for the museum site. The object of the development plan was not simply to add plantings to increase visitors' comfort. Rather, Lerner and the Hirshhorn staff wanted an investigation into an overarching improvement to the garden's design, including additional lighting, a restaurant, and new hardscape surfaces, walls, planters, and benches. By June, Buckler had already talked to nurseryman and landscape designer William Frederick, Jr., of Wilmington, Delaware, as well as Lester Collins, about providing a plan for the sculpture garden.⁹⁰ In a July memorandum to Ripley, Buckler recommended several landscape architects the secretary might wish to contact, including Thomas Church of San Francisco, and Collins's former student Robert Zion of Zion & Breen, located in Imlaystown, New Jersey, as well as Frederick and Collins himself.⁹¹

An additional issue the Smithsonian grappled with at this time was the need to provide adequate access to the sculpture garden for visitors in wheelchairs. Hirshhorn Deputy Director Stephen E. Weil reported in his June 11, 1975, memorandum that the current practice of wheelchairs being hand-carried down the steps to the garden levels was unsatisfactory. The Hirshhorn sought a ramp to make the garden levels accessible, and Weil's memo suggested one that entered the garden from the northeast corner.⁹² The Smithsonian, or at least the Hirshhorn, therefore appears to have been making an effort to comply with the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 before regulations for its implementation were approved by the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare at the end of April 1977.⁹³

In the June 11 memo, Weil reported that Ripley, Lerner, the museum staff, and Bunshaft had agreed that the garden needed to be altered to accommodate visitor comfort, better display of sculpture, and the building's appearance.⁹⁴ By that time, Buckler had already met with Zion.⁹⁵ Harold Breen, Zion's business partner, wrote to Buckler on June 9 with a proposal that entailed a site visit and meeting with the Smithsonian, preliminary studies, a master site development plan, and cost estimates for the proposed work. Development of the master plan could be accomplished for \$11,000. Once the master plan was approved, additional work, including a grading plan, a location and dimensioning plan, coordination with the museum and the architect, construction plans, cost estimates, planting plan and plant list, specifications, and supervision of the installation of the plant material, would be billed at \$45 per hour each for three employees. A later estimate pegged the total cost of the planning, design, and implementation of a new garden concept at approximately \$17,000.⁹⁶

⁹⁰ Buckler to Ripley, April 25, 1975, Smithsonian Archives, record unit 510, box 15; Weil to Lerner, June 18, 1975, Smithsonian Archives, accession 04-149, box 3.

⁹¹ Buckler to Ripley, Memorandum: Hirshhorn: Landscaping and Garden Surface, July 8, 1975, Smithsonian Institution Archives.

⁹² Weil to Reiss, June 11, 1975.

⁹³ See "The Accessibility Movement" in this report, p. 19.

⁹⁴ Weil to Reiss, June 11, 1975.

⁹⁵ Buckler to Robert Zion, Zion & Breen Associates, June 9, 1975, Smithsonian Archives, accession 04-149, box 3.

⁹⁶ Harold Breen, Zion & Breen Associates, to Buckler, Smithsonian Institution, May 29, 1975. Smithsonian Archives, accession 04-149, box 3; Buckler to Ripley, July 8, 1975.

While Secretary Ripley agreed with the necessity of revising the landscape scheme of the sculpture garden, he was less sanguine about hiring a landscape architect to carry out the entire planning, design, and implementation process. In essence, he balked at the cost of such a move. When Lerner reported to Ripley on May 20 that the Hirshhorn had met with and considered hiring a landscape architect, the secretary responded, according to Buckler, “don’t we have in-house capacity without spending more \$\$?”⁹⁷ Lerner, although he thought hiring a landscape architect was the best solution to the situation, ultimately determined that funds were not available to do so in fiscal year 1976, and the project seems to have languished for a year. When it arose again in the summer of 1976, the situation had not changed. Ripley preferred that the design be done in-house; Hirshhorn staff preferred that a professional landscape architect be hired; and no funding was available. Ripley’s proposed course of action was therefore followed of necessity.⁹⁸

The secretary had felt that Buckler and his Horticultural Services Division, along with the Horticultural Advisory Committee – and especially Collins as an advisor – could handle the needed revisions to the sculpture garden.⁹⁹ Collins had pledged to assist “in every way possible,” but “since he was on our Horticultural Advisory Committee, he did not feel he could take the project on as a paid consultant,” according to Buckler.¹⁰⁰ Then, in the summer of 1976, Collins submitted his resignation from the Horticultural Advisory Committee because he had been asked by Wilkes & Faulkner, a Washington, D.C., architectural firm, “to consult professionally” on plans for the Victorian garden south of the Smithsonian Castle. Continuing to serve on the HAC would have been a conflict of interest.¹⁰¹

Buckler and what was by then known as the Horticultural Services Division subsequently prepared their own designs for alterations to the sculpture garden, without a professional landscape architect. Lerner stated his museum’s eagerness to participate in the process in August of 1976, specifying four elements that any plan must address. Those elements were 1) access by visitors with disabilities, 2) trees and shrubbery that would create “a cool, shaded and refreshing area,” 3) lighting, and 4) safety, including addressing the loose pebbles and lack of handrails on the stairs. His memo offered several suggestions that would ultimately be incorporated into the garden as built, including turf “islands” on which to place sculpture and paths between grassy areas, rather than a uniform ground, as in the Bunshaft design. Lerner repeated the Hirshhorn staff’s preference that a professional landscape architect be hired for the job.¹⁰²

Work began with a brainstorming session involving members of the Horticultural Services Division, the Office of Facilities Planning and Engineering Services (OFPE), and the Hirshhorn’s exhibit staff. Ideas included keeping “gallery spaces in mind, but not the individual sculptures and their placement,” ramps

⁹⁷ Buckler to Charles Blitzer, Assistant Secretary for History and Art, Abram Lerner, Director of the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, and Richard Ault, Director of Support Activities, June 10, 1975, Smithsonian Archives, accession 04-149, box 3. The landscape architect Lerner had met with was probably Robert Zion or Harold Breen; Bunshaft had recommended the firm.

⁹⁸ Weil to Reiss, June 11, 1975; Ripley to Lerner, July 1, 1976; Lerner to Buckler, July 8, 1976.

⁹⁹ Ripley to Lerner, Memorandum, July 1, 1976, Smithsonian Archives.

¹⁰⁰ Buckler to Ripley, Memorandum: Hirshhorn: Landscaping and Garden Surface, July 8, 1975, Smithsonian Institution Archives.

¹⁰¹ Lester Collins to Buckler, July 11, 1976, Smithsonian Institution Archives, acc. 94-035, box 7.

¹⁰² Lerner to Charles Blitzer, Assistant Secretary for History and Art, Memorandum: Sculpture Garden, HMSG, August 18, 1976.

throughout the garden, replacement of the gravel surface, possibly with paving and turf, “more (lots more) shade,” additional water features or an expansion of the current pool, and “creation of mounds or additional level changes, especially in the lower level.”¹⁰³ By the end of the month the design process had been organized by OFPES due to the number of disciplines involved. Shannon, the Hirshhorn’s exhibits director, was charged with preparing initial sketches outlining the museum’s concept of the garden.¹⁰⁴ By the beginning of October, Shannon’s office had completed conceptual sketches, “tentative schematics,” and a model, which were handed over to the Horticultural Services Division. William Pittman, a landscape architecture student from the University of Virginia, had been hired to develop the sketches into a plan in consultation with Smithsonian staff. The plans, along with cost estimates, continued to be refined through the fall to be ready for presentation to Secretary Ripley at the beginning of 1977.¹⁰⁵

The nature of the Smithsonian’s design can be gathered from sketches and more finished plans held in the Smithsonian Archives. In the most detailed plan reviewed for this report, the wheelchair ramp enters the sculpture garden from the northeast and curves through a turfed area down to a paved lower level. (Figure 17) Bunshaft’s rectangular pool across the north-south axis of the museum has been replaced by a raised pool with its long sides running north to south. A smaller raised pool is located in the northwest room. The design features allées of honey locust or linden trees and display spaces defined by yew hedges and freestanding walls. The plan prepared for the January 1977 meeting with Ripley, which may have been a refinement of this plan, included sod, thirty-two linden or honey locusts,

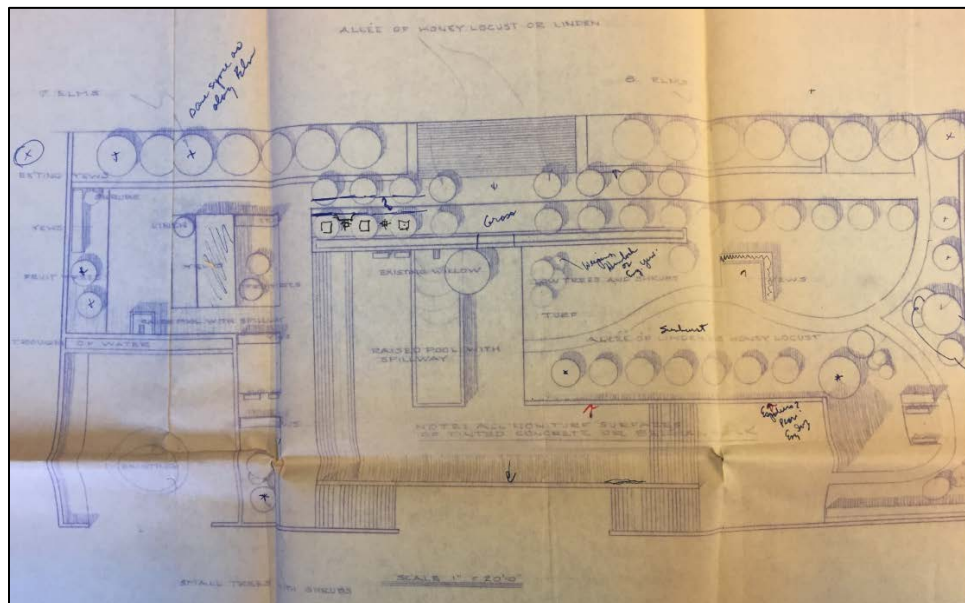


Figure 17 – One of several in-house redesigns prepared by the Smithsonian. (Smithsonian Institution Archives)

¹⁰³ Buckler to the Record, Memorandum: Renovation of Sculpture Garden – HMSG, August 24, 1976, Smithsonian Institution Archives.

¹⁰⁴ Lerner to Blitzer, Memorandum: Sculpture Garden, HMSG, August 31, 1976.

¹⁰⁵ Joe Shannon, Chief, Exhibits and Design, HMSG, Memorandum: Horticultural Services for HMSG Garden and Plaza, October 6, 1976; Buckler to Ripley, Memorandum: Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden: Landscaping, October 18, 1976; Buckler to Shannon, Memorandum: HMSG: Landscaping, October 27, 1976, Smithsonian Institution Archives; Weil to Dean Anderson, Special Assistant to the Office of the Assistant Secretary for History and Art, December 27, 1976. Smithsonian Archives, accession 04-149, box 3.

sixty yews, new retaining walls, walks and seating areas, and freestanding walls, as well as fifteen elms, six flowering trees, twelve evergreen trees, three magnolias, and fourteen vines.¹⁰⁶

Ripley brought Collins along when the plan was presented in early 1977, and it did not receive a warm reception from the landscape architect. Two members of the exhibits staff had different memories of Collins's expression of his judgment, but the message was clear. Shannon remembered Collins as saying that the design was "trash." Scheisser reported that he said, "That design stinketh."¹⁰⁷ Neither Shannon nor Scheisser recalled the reasons for Collins's criticism, but an insight may be gained from comments Collins made in a U.S. Commission of Fine Arts meeting a year later. In his own design for the sculpture garden, Collins had proposed ramps on the north side to accommodate wheelchairs. When asked about the location by the commissioners, he replied that arriving from other locations would make visitors in wheelchairs feel like "second rate citizens." In his scheme, they reached the sculpture garden like everyone else.¹⁰⁸ The northeast corner entrance of the in-house design may then have struck Collins as a "second rate" arrival.

Collins also apparently said, either at the meeting, or later to Ripley, that a better design might be obtained from an individual rather than a committee, because Ripley said he agreed with that assessment in a March 18, 1977, letter to the landscape architect.¹⁰⁹ Charles Blitzer, the Smithsonian's Assistant Secretary for History and Art, noted in an April 11 letter to Ripley that this was among the conclusions that "seemed to be generally shared" at an earlier meeting, probably the one at which the in-house design was reviewed. A similar agreement was reached that Smithsonian's limited funding should not be spent "more or less at random on unrelated improvements."¹¹⁰ These two letters also show that Ripley and the Hirshhorn had both reached the conclusion that Collins should be approached to handle the redesign. On March 18, Ripley asked Collins for an estimate of the fees he might charge if the Smithsonian were to contract with him for a "master site development plan" – the same product that the Hirshhorn sought from Zion & Breen two years earlier. Blitzer's letter of April 11 informs Ripley that he and Lerner had already contacted Collins to see if he would be interested in taking on the redesign. When Collins expressed his interest, Blitzer wrote to Ripley to seek his advice. "Neither Al [Lerner] nor I knows enough about Lester Collins to judge whether he is the right man to do this job," Blitzer wrote. "If you have confidence in him, we would recommend that he be asked to go ahead. If not, we would like to look elsewhere, because we do feel that securing a plan we can all be happy with is a matter of urgency."

¹⁰⁶ Shannon to Lerner, Memorandum: Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, January 10, 1977.

¹⁰⁷ Interview with Joe Shannon, former Chief of Exhibition and Design, HMSG, 1975-1986, August 16 (in person) and 19 (phone), 2019 (notes written August 19, 2019); telephone interview with Edward Scheisser, former Chief of Exhibition and Design, August 9, 2019, Smithsonian Office of Architectural History and Historic Preservation. It is not certain whether either or both Shannon and Scheisser were present at the meeting. Shannon was exhibits director at the time of the meeting; Scheisser was not.

¹⁰⁸ U.S. Commission of Fine Arts, Transcript of Meeting, January 19, 1978, U.S. Commission of Fine Arts Archives, 9.

¹⁰⁹ Ripley to Collins, March 18, 1977, Smithsonian Archives.

¹¹⁰ Blitzer to Ripley, April 11, 1977, Smithsonian Archives. Collins replied to both Ripley and Blitzer on April 5, suggesting he received their letters at about the same time.

Lester Collins and the Redesign of the Hirshhorn Sculpture Garden

Contracting and the Design Process

Collins wrote to Ripley on April 5, 1977, saying he was “very willing” to cut his rate from \$40 per hour to \$25 per hour to do the work, with a not-to-exceed limit of \$4,000 (meaning that his work was to be limited to 160 hours). If additional work was required, he would not charge the Smithsonian “simply because a most fascinating and challenging job is involved.”¹¹¹ He signed a contract for the work on May 17, 1977, for the fees agreed to in his letter. The contract also defined a limited scope of work for the landscape architect:

The contractor shall provide a master site development plan for the Sculpture Garden of the Hirshhorn Museum to include drawings, written descriptions and advice. This information shall be sufficiently definitive so that preliminary cost estimates may be made by others as well as construction plans and specifications. The drawings and written description shall include, but not be limited to various elements, such as pavement, walks, pools and fountains (if called for), handicapped access, grading and surfacing treatment, walls, horticultural materials and seating, etc. Suggestions for security and lighting will be prepared but not specified.¹¹²

The contract identified two phases of Collins’s work – a preliminary design phase to include sketches and rough designs and narratives for review by Ripley or his representatives, sufficient for the Smithsonian to use as the basis for a model, and a final presentation in the form of Mylar drawings and/or written outline specifications. The contract specified a ninety-day period of performance. Significant in the agreement is work left to others. Collins would not be responsible for construction drawings or final specifications, cost estimates, inspection of plant materials before purchase, supervision of plant installation, supervision of construction, or reviews of the design by federal agencies, such as the National Capital Planning Commission and the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts.

It appears that this contract was later extended. Shannon wrote to the Smithsonian’s contracts office in February 1978 that Collins had completed his contract and that the Smithsonian continued to require his services “for belated modifications to his design as well as his expertise and articulate voice in the presentation of our plans” to review agencies.¹¹³ A response from the contracts office was not located during research for this report, but since Collins continued to be involved with the design at least until the fall of 1980, the request for the extension appears to have been granted. The only alteration to the services Collins was called on to provide were presentations to the review agencies, which had not been included in the original contract but which Collins had already participated in on multiple occasions.

Collins’s contract with the Smithsonian was consistent with the way the Smithsonian approached several of its projects at this time. It will be remembered that Zion & Breen proposed providing a site development plan for the sculpture garden first, with a contract for construction drawings, specifications, construction oversight, and other work to be agreed to at a later date, if appropriate. The

¹¹¹ Collins to Ripley, April 5, 1977, Smithsonian Institution Archives.

¹¹² Architect-Engineer Fixed-Price Contract between Lester Collins, Landscape Architect, and Smithsonian Institution, Office of Supply Services, May 17, 1977, Smithsonian Archives, accession 04-149, box 3.

¹¹³ Shannon to George Zumph, [Smithsonian Institution, Contracts Division,] February 22, 1978, Smithsonian Archives, record unit 510, box 15.

Smithsonian had agreed to a similar arrangement with Dan Kiley & Partners in 1974 for work for the Victorian Garden. Kiley's firm was hired to develop a schematic design for the first phase of a master plan for the area. Although the intent was to hire Kiley to develop the entire master plan, which would be implemented in phases, only the schematic design was agreed to first. When horticulturist Buckler proposed changes to Kiley's design, the Smithsonian determined to follow the horticulturist's plans, and Kiley's association with the project ended.¹¹⁴ Collins, it will be remembered, left the HAC in the summer of 1976 to work with Wilkes & Faulkner at the Victorian Garden, perhaps in connection with Buckler's ideas for the space. It is unlikely that the Smithsonian anticipated that Collins would provide construction drawings and oversight at the Hirshhorn, but the Victorian Garden episode makes it clear that the institution felt it did not need what we would today call a prime contractor to oversee all aspects of a specific project from conception to completion before beginning work.

Once the contract with Collins was in place, a process of developing, refining, and seeking approval of the design began. The chief designer (Collins) developed the program for alterations to the sculpture garden in consultation with the client, in this case with Smithsonian and Hirshhorn staff. Joe Shannon recalled that Collins met most often with Lerner in regard to the sculpture garden redesign, and evidence suggests that Lerner exerted some influence over the plan. He was not, however, the only museum or Smithsonian representative in conversation with the landscape architect. Shannon attended at least two recorded meetings that Collins participated in, as did Hirshhorn Deputy Director Steven Weil. Ripley, Phillip K. Reiss of the Office of Facilities Planning & Engineering Services, and Nancy Kirkpatrick, who would later become the Hirshhorn's executive director, also met with Collins.¹¹⁵ It must also be assumed that the exhibits staff discussed their ideas for the redesign among themselves, to be transmitted to Collins by Lerner, Weil, or whoever communicated with the landscape architect. Correspondence on design issues that included Collins, Hirshhorn and Smithsonian staff, as well as Assistant Secretary Blitzer and Richard L. Ault, who held a number of positions in the Smithsonian, was found throughout the design development and construction periods.

Collins revised his design based on comments from the client, as well as from Washington's review agencies, which at the time consisted of the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts, the National Capital Planning Commission, and the Joint Committee on Landmarks (forerunner of today's state historic preservation office). Records show that Collins attended all of the commission meetings on the project until its approval, as well as meetings with commission staff.¹¹⁶ Once Collins had refined his design and it received approval from appropriate authorities, construction drawings were required. Collins's contract did not call for such drawings from him, and the Smithsonian apparently determined that it either did not have the manpower or the expertise to do the job in house. As a result, the institution hired the E/A

¹¹⁴ EHT Tracerics, Inc., SurfaceDesign, Inc., and BIG Architecture, "Smithsonian Institution South Mall Campus Cultural Landscape Report," prepared for the Smithsonian Institution, February 2018, 104-107.

¹¹⁵ References to meetings on the sculpture garden design are scattered throughout documentation reviewed for this study and likely do not represent all meetings that took place. Examples of correspondence related to meetings include: Weil to Lerner, July 19, 1977, Smithsonian Archives, accession 04-149, box 3; Reiss to Ault, Blitzer, Lerner, Yellin, and Jameson, November 18, 1977, Smithsonian Archives, record unit 510, box 15; Reiss, To the Record, December 9, 1977, Smithsonian Archives, record unit 510, box 15.

¹¹⁶ U.S. Commission of Fine Arts, Meeting Minutes, Internet Archives website, November 22, 1977, and January 19, 1978; Reiss to Jameson, Collins, and Lerner, December 1, 1977; Reiss to Lerner, Jameson, Ault, Hamilton, January 23, 1978, Smithsonian Archives; Reiss to Lerner, Jameson, Ault, Shannon, and Collins, February 22, 1978. Smithsonian Archives, record unit 510, box 15.

Design Group, an architecture and engineering firm with offices in Washington and Silver Spring, Maryland, to transform Collins's preliminary drawings, written descriptions, and design ideas into construction drawings and then to supervise construction. Correspondence indicates that E/A Design Group and OFPES "were working closely with Lester" in September 1978 as the project geared up for construction.¹¹⁷ E/A Design Group may have contributed to or designed late refinements to details of the sculpture garden that responded either to issues of funding or regulatory requirements, such as handrails and the height of ramp curb walls.

Ultimately, as is characteristic of the design process in architecture or landscape architecture in Washington, the various offices of the client and multiple review agencies provided general ideas well as specific suggestions for the project; federal regulations required certain issues to be addressed in certain ways; and contracting officers ensured adherence to the project's budget. The chief designer accepted, altered, massaged, argued against, and finally melded the input from other participants in the process with his own ideas into a coherent whole that manifested his chosen design solution and aesthetic expression. The following text will note specific influences on proposed alterations to the garden and the manner in which Collins expressed them in his redesign.

Design Development

Both Ripley's letter and Collins's May 17 contract specify the details he was expected to address. The contract stated that Collins's "drawings and written description shall include, but not be limited to various elements such as, pavement, walks, pools and fountains (if called for), handicapped access, grading and surfacing treatment, walls, horticultural materials and seating, etc. Suggestions for security and lighting will be prepared but not specified."¹¹⁸ In addition to these areas of concentration, Collins understood the various problems with the existing garden he would have to resolve. In the first meeting with the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts on the project, on November 22, 1977, he identified the four outstanding issues that needed resolution:

- 1) the placement of accessible ramps in the garden – Collins wanted "to make the ramp solution here not secondary but primary";
- 2) visitor comfort – "As you know, it is too hot in July, August, parts of September and June, so, therefore, more trees" for shade;
- 3) the gravel paving – Collins noted the gravel "is pretty beastly for a good deal of the sculpture," having "marred" much of it; and
- 4) display of sculpture – "I think also there is a feeling that maybe we could do more to honor the sculpture," he said at the meeting.¹¹⁹

Collins's first set of alterations to the garden is dated June 27, 1977 – five weeks after he signed the contract. (Figure 18) He endeavored to remain close to Bunshaft's original plan while trying to resolve the problems with it. To address the accessibility issue, Collins replaced the north stairs with lateral ramps and a central viewing platform, essentially mirroring the arrangement of the stairs on the south

¹¹⁷ Shannon to Lerner, September 6, 1978, Smithsonian Archives, record unit 510, box 15.

¹¹⁸ Architect-Engineer Fixed-Price Contract between Lester Collins, Landscape Architect, and Smithsonian Institution, Office of Supply Services, May 17, 1977.

¹¹⁹ U.S. Commission of Fine Arts. Transcript of Meeting, November 22, 1977. U.S. Commission of Fine Arts Archives, 57-58.

side and providing an entry to the sculpture garden for visitors in wheelchairs or those coming from the Mall as dignified as those arriving from the museum. Collins described the north entry as “a royal approach.”¹²⁰ The lateral ramps also provided easily accessible, direct views of the two most prominent locations for sculpture in the redesigned garden – the two raised, sodded pedestals Collins placed at the northeast and northwest corners. The idea for these pedestals may have derived from the concept of turf “islands” that Lerner had suggested in his August 1976 memo on the redesign of the sculpture garden. Since Collins was not yet under contract at that time, it is not clear whether he knew about the memo, but the idea could have been conveyed to him in meetings where the project was discussed.

Another ramp on the east connected the intermediate to the lower level. Collins maintained the west stairs in their entirety in the June 1977 plan and kept the east stairs with the exception of the portion removed for the ramp and associated planters. Additional details, however, show that he directed circulation through the sculpture garden in a way that Bunshaft had not. The landscape architect introduced five fixed locations for sculpture in the garden – at each entrance, on the raised pedestals at the end of the lateral ramps, and on a precast concrete shelf on the east wall at the bottom of the east run of the lateral stairs. Sculptures in these locations would serve to draw visitors from the Hirshhorn, from Jefferson Drive, and from the National Mall – first to the viewing platforms at the entrances, where they could see the garden spread out below them, then down into garden itself. Within the garden, additional focal points spurred movement. One was the fountain at the head of the ramp between the intermediate and lower levels. From that location, visitors could be drawn to sculpture at the lower

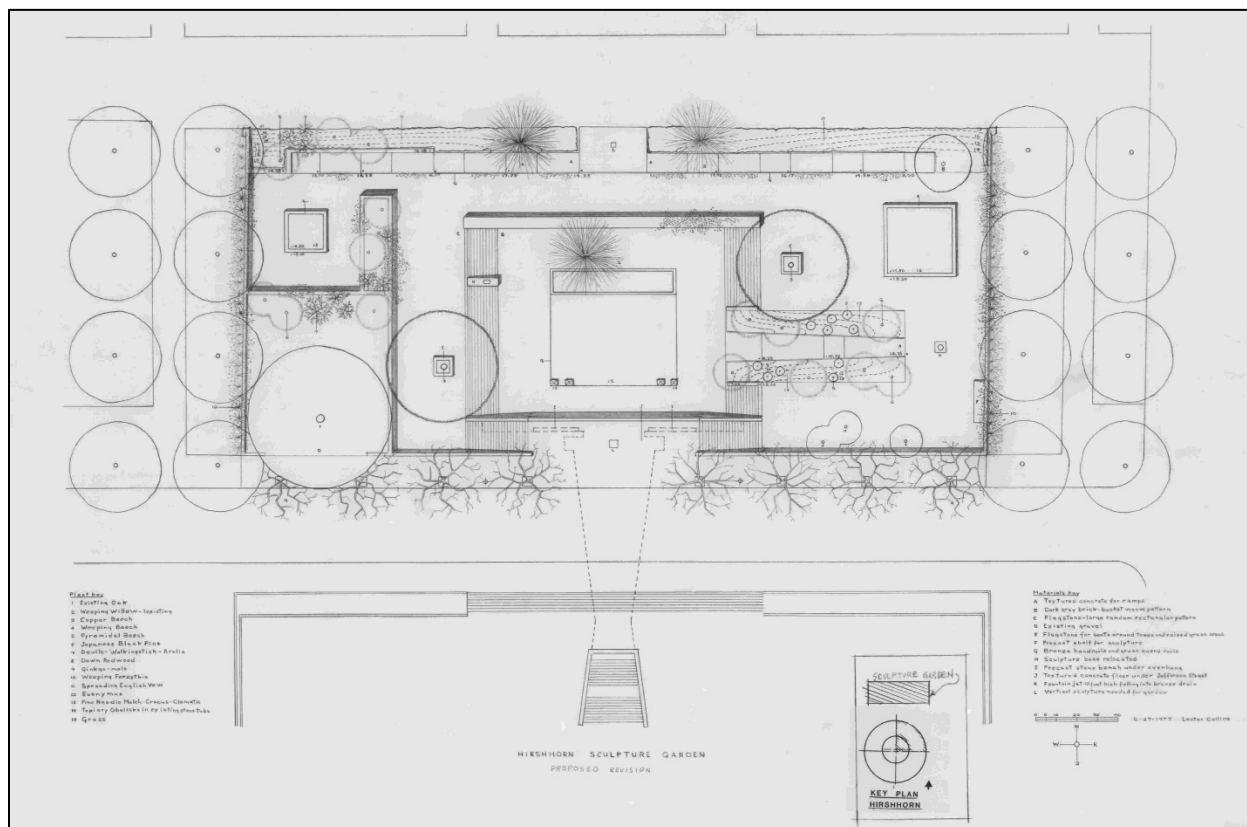


Figure 18 – Lester Collins’s first design remained close to Bunshaft’s original. (Smithsonian Institution Archives)

¹²⁰ U.S. Commission of Fine Arts, Transcript of Meeting, January 19, 1978, 9.

level; from the lower level, the fountain would encourage visitors to explore the east intermediate area. The raised turf islands also acted as focal points, however visitors reached the intermediate level.

To address visitor comfort, Collins increased vegetation in the garden, adding trees to increase shade, as well as flowering plants on both the north and south, along the ramp to the lower level, on both intermediate levels, and around the northwest corner room. The plan proposed many of the plant species that would ultimately be used in the executed garden and in the same places. To Bunshaft's weeping willow and the euonymus installed in the garden in 1976, Collins proposed adding Japanese black pine; weeping, pyramidal, and copper beech; Dawn redwood; ginkgo; and spreading English yew. He also proposed flowering plants, including the unusual choice of Devil's walking stick, as well as weeping forsythia on the east and west walls, crocus, clematis planted in pine needle mulch, turf grass, and "topiary obelisks in existing stone tubs" in the south corners of the lower level grass rectangle.

To address the problems posed by Bunshaft's gravel for both wheelchairs and sculpture, Collins proposed dark grey brick in a basket-weave pattern and grass (lower level) and random-plan, rectangular flagstone (intermediate level). The ramps were planned to be constructed of textured concrete, while gravel remained the paving around the oak in the southwest corner. Plantings in square voids in the paving reflected Collins's Modernist approach to landscape architecture, juxtaposing materials produced by industrial processes against natural forms.

To "honor" the sculpture placed in the garden, Collins proposed what he called three "grass theaters" at the CFA meeting – the two raised, sodded pedestals at the end of the ramps and the grass square next to the pool on the lower level. He also divided the garden using plantings, breaking Bunshaft's open spaces into what he would later call "rooms" with trees defining the vertical dimension. The copper beeches on the east and west intermediate levels, Japanese black pines and pyramidal beeches along the ramp to the lower level, and weeping beeches near the south walls that Collins proposed divided the open spaces of the earlier design in an attempt to focus attention on individual or smaller groups of sculpture and diminish overlapping views. The idea of using vegetation to divide the space may have come from Lerner, according to Carol Ottesen's book *A Guide to Smithsonian Gardens*.¹²¹ In the southwest and northwest corners of the intermediate level, Collins's plantings provided shade to rooms already enclosed by concrete walls. He also proposed that the trees could be the location for lighting, enabling nighttime use of the sculpture garden, as called for in his contract.¹²²

Reiss and Collins returned to the commission on January 19, 1978, with a revised plan, model, perspective rendering, and sections produced by OFPES. (Figures 19, 20, and 21) The design remained fairly close to what was presented in November, but with some changes that carried over into the implemented design. The model, plan, and rendering all show a planted buffer added between the lateral ramps on the north and the adjacent, intermediate level paving. In the November 1977 plan, the paving had reached right to the ramp wall. Reiss explained that the change incorporated the ramps into the garden, rather than separating them from it. This configuration of the ramp eliminated the railing along its south side that had been shown in Collins's June 1977 plan and retained in the November 1977

¹²¹ Carol Ottesen, *A Guide to Smithsonian Gardens* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Books, 2011), 77.

¹²² Lerner to Phillip K. Reiss, Director, Office of Facilities Planning and Engineering Services. August 8, 1977. This letter includes a cost estimate for construction of Collins's plan, including estimates for electrical conduit and lighting.

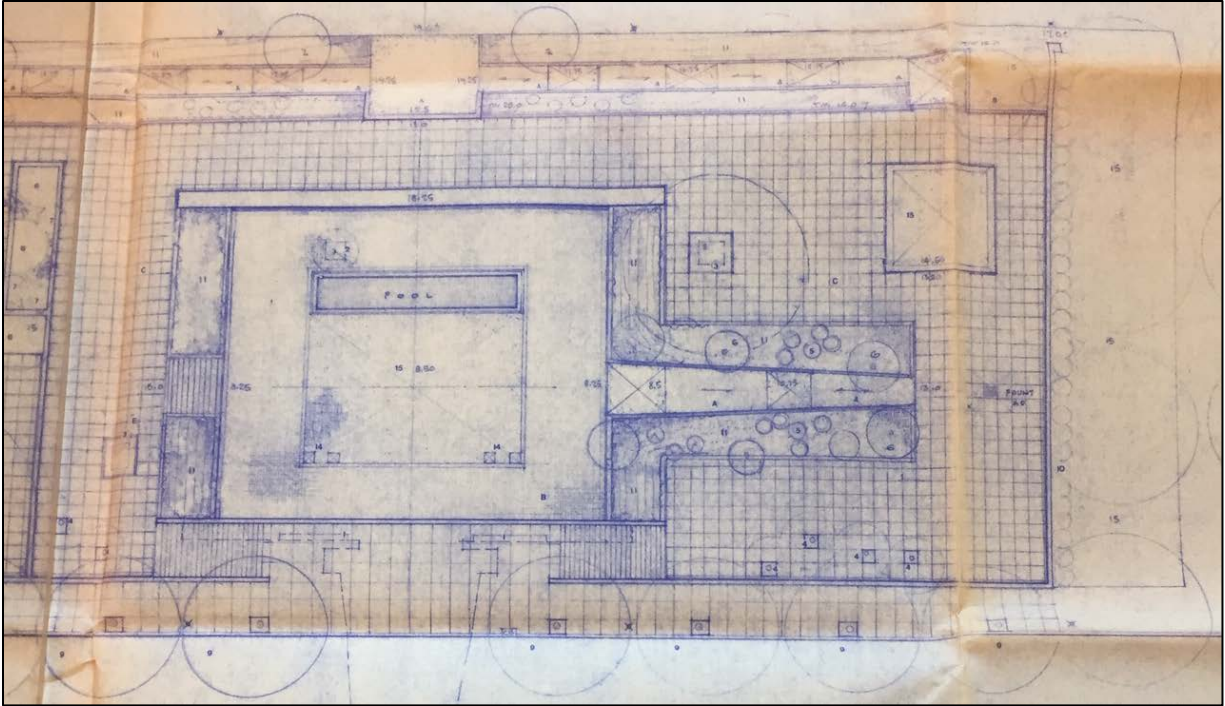


Figure 19 – The plan shown to CFA in January 1978 replaced some of the west stairs with plantings. (Smithsonian Institution Archives)

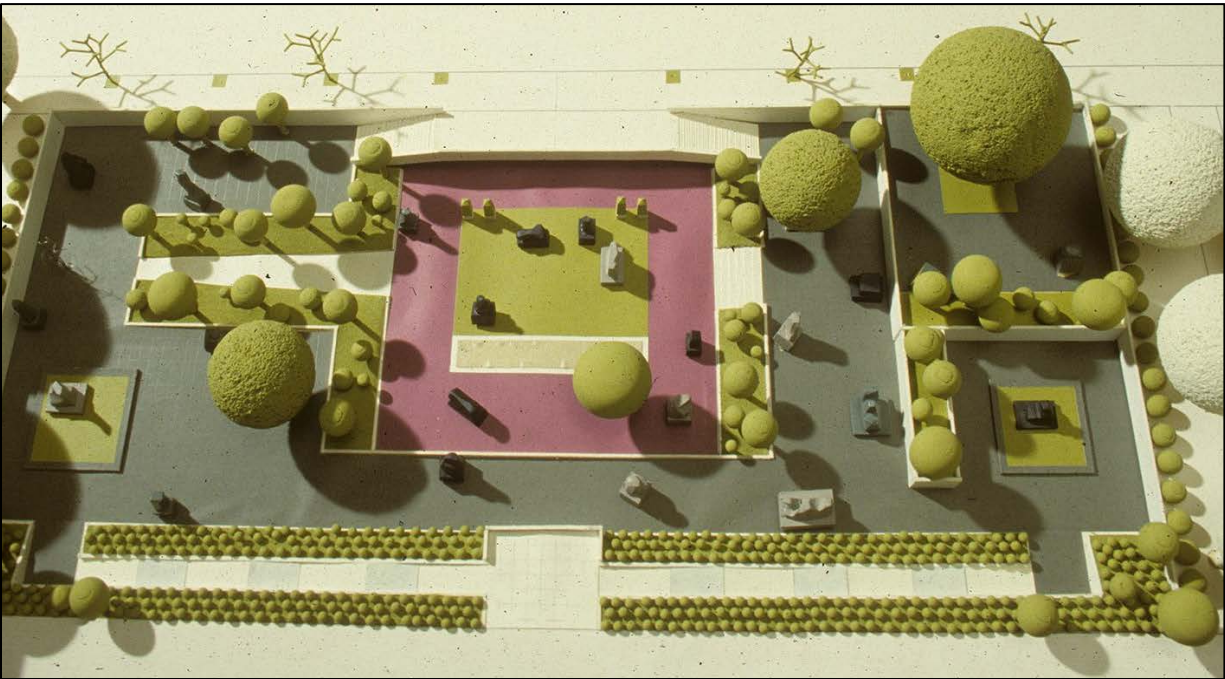


Figure 20 – Plantings flanking the west stairs included smaller and larger trees. North is at the bottom of the photograph of the model. (Smithsonian Institution Archives)

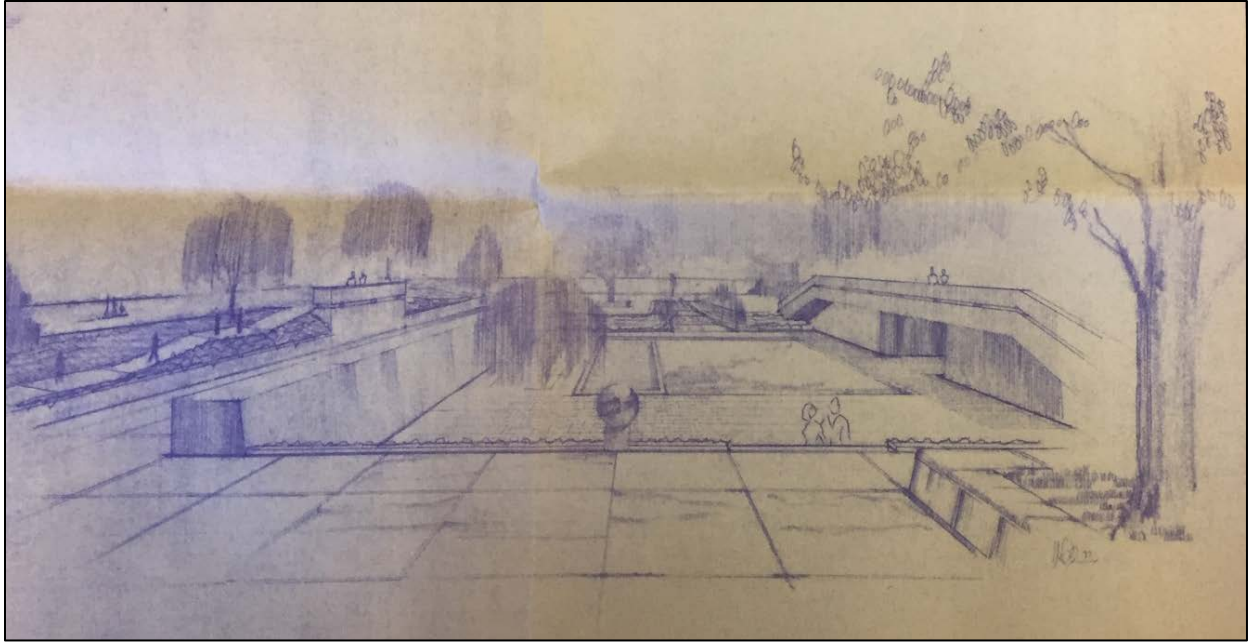


Figure 21 – The rendering submitted to the Commission of Fine Arts for review at its January 19, 1978, meeting introduced plantings between the accessible ramp and the garden (left), but eliminated the railing that had been included in Collins’s June 1977 version of the design. (Smithsonian Institution Archives)

iteration.¹²³ Chairman Brown asked about the absence of railings, to which Reiss replied that they were not required for the low slope of the ramps, according to current regulations. Reiss, in a January 23 memorandum apprising his superiors of the meeting, also noted that “the existing backs of yews serve as a natural inhibitor” to off-track movement.¹²⁴ This may have been an instance of the regulations for implementation of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 being unclear, or at least subject to various interpretations. The January 1978 plan also reduced the extent of the facing stairs to the lower level in order to introduce additional plantings. While the plan does not identify the species, the model illustrates smaller and larger trees in the planters intended for these areas.¹²⁵

Collins’s description of what he called “clinker brick” and gray flagstone during the meeting elicited Brown’s comment that introducing grays in a palette generally defined by browns and tans might be an issue of concern.¹²⁶ The dark colors also might reflect heat onto the sculptures and the visitors. He

¹²³ The legend for Collins’s June 27, 1977, plan of the garden calls for “bronze handrails and grass [presumably brass] guard rails” along the ramps. While the plan considered at the November 22 CFA meeting was not found in research for this report, both the minutes of the meeting and the letter from Secretary Brown to the Smithsonian ask for detail drawings of the railings to be used.

¹²⁴ Reiss to Lerner, Jameson, Ault, Hamilton, January 23, 1978. Smithsonian Archives, record unit 510, box 15.

¹²⁵ U.S. Commission of Fine Arts, Transcript of Meeting, January 19, 1978. The transcript identifies the SI speaker as “Reed,” but since the meeting minutes indicate that the Smithsonian’s representatives were Collins and Reiss, and since no one named Reed appeared in research conducted for this report, it is assumed that Reiss was the speaker.

¹²⁶ Collins’s use of the term “clinker brick” in the hearing seems to have been something of a misnomer. Clinker brick is usually thought of as “vitrified, overburned brick that clinks when struck; generally darker in color than other bricks from the same clay and misshapen.” It can also refer, simply, to dark-colored “glazed brick,” “often used as headers in Flemish bond.” (Ward Bucher, editor, *Dictionary of Building Preservation*, New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1996, 102.) Based, on other evidence, it would appear that the brick Collins proposed was dark grey but

suggested a gray-brown granite, to which Collins replied that he would love to be able to use granite but thought it might be too expensive for the project. This exchange illustrates Collins's practical approach to the landscape design and the flexibility he showed in some of its details. The commissioners approved the layout as presented, but also determined that the materials, plantings, and details, including railings, needed further discussion. Since landscape architect CFA member Edward Durell Stone, Jr., was unable to attend the meeting, the commission wanted his review of the design before signing off on the plantings.¹²⁷

Collins was not known for written accounts of his design philosophy, and the narrative required by his contract was not discovered in research for this report. In the January 1978 hearing, however, he provided perhaps the best verbal explication of his ideas for the Hirshhorn Sculpture Garden that is available. The three chief concerns in developing the design, he said, were movement through space, dividing the garden into exhibit spaces, and flexibility so that Hirshhorn exhibit designers could arrange the sculpture in an appropriate manner. The landscape architect captured all three concerns in one statement: "The basic problem here I think is creating outdoor movements," he told the commissioners. "We just don't have the exhibition space which the Smithsonian wants for sculpture. We have to be more flexible, and therefore the stress has been on creating outdoor rooms." Architect Kevin Roche, who along with Dan Kiley had already designed a sculpture garden with very obvious rooms for the Oakland Museum of California, said he didn't see additional rooms in the plan. Reiss pointed out that the ramp to the lower level created a "room element," to which Roche replied that there were no enclosing walls. Chairman Brown, however, understood what Collins was trying to do. "Enclosing plantings," he responded, "walls of plantings." Collins explained further: "[B]y means of getting a very loose green wall which you pierce through here and another wall you pierce through here, the thing is breaking down into rooms."¹²⁸

Without benefit of video showing where Collins was pointing on the plan or model when he made these remarks, the specific references to "here" and "here" cannot be precisely located, but taken with Reiss's reference to the ramp and Brown's to "enclosing walls," as well as the planting scheme, it is easy to see

was not misshapen. His June 27, 1977, plan for the garden describes the brick paving on the lower level as "Dark grey brick – basket weave pattern." The legend is not included in the copy of the January 1978 plan presented to the Commission of Fine Arts reviewed for this study, but a submitted drawing includes an illustration of the basket weave brick. Finally, the February 27, 1981, drawing for the final phase of construction also calls for "brick pavers basketweave pattern." No discussion takes place in the January 1978 meeting of the ramifications of employing misshapen bricks in paving designed to accommodate wheelchairs and strollers, as well as the movement of heavy sculptures, although the potential difficulty of getting wheelchairs along the gravel walks of the Mall to the sculpture garden entrance is discussed. In addition, in its letter to the Smithsonian after the January 1978 meeting, CFA found it necessary to enclose the word "clinker" in quotation marks, indicating caution in using that term. Based on all this information, and the fact that the brick used in construction of the lower level of the garden matches the description in Collins's first drawing of the space, it appears that Collins planned the use of flat, dark grey bricks in a regular, basket weave pattern as paving for the lowest level of the sculpture garden and did not consider the textural implications of the term "clinker brick."

¹²⁷ U.S. Commission of Fine Arts, Transcript of Meeting, January 19, 1978; U.S. Commission of Fine Arts, Meeting Minutes, November 22, 1977, and J. Carter Brown, Chairman, U.S. Commission of Fine Arts, to Reiss, January 19, 1978, Internet Archives website, <https://archive.org/details/cfaminutes19jan1978>, accessed October 1, 2019. Brown actually declared during the meeting that both the layout and planting scheme were approved, but the follow-up letter, dated January 26, withholds approval of the plantings until Stone could look at them.

¹²⁸ U.S. Commission of Fine Arts, Transcript of Meeting, January 19, 1978, 9, 12-13.

how Collins planned to use the spaces separated in plan by ramps or stairs (indicating changes of elevation) as the horizontal boundaries of the outdoor rooms, with trees as the vertical walls that enclosed those spaces. His design attempted to satisfy the twin goals of creating both a cool, refreshing garden and outdoor exhibit spaces by using greenery rather than built walls as dividers.

Further, he designed the garden to encourage and direct movement through it. The January 1978 plan did not include sculpture locations at the entrances (although photographs taken shortly after the garden's reopening suggest sculpture was placed at least at the south entrance, as the earlier plan prescribed), but the remainder of the circulation pattern remained unchanged. From the overlooks on the north and south, an overall view was obtained. Descending the ramps or stairs led visitors to direct views of sculptures. Seeing additional works beyond the initial focal points encouraged movement toward them. While the visitor moved through one open-air room, he or she might spy additional sculpture through or above the pierced green walls or along other corridors, such as the ramp to the lower level or the east-west paved walk on the intermediate level between the landings of the lateral ramps. The model shows sculpture along all these vistas. It is clear from these details that Collins had taken the lessons of Chinese and Japanese gardens that he had studied and from Innisfree, where he applied the same technique,s to the problems posed by the Hirshhorn Sculpture Garden. It would seem that precedents from the former tradition were uppermost in his mind, as he described the "tracery" effect of such piercings as he planned as "very Chinesy."¹²⁹

Collins clearly had some ambitions for the garden. "There aren't very many sculpture gardens and what we want to do is make it better than the Museum of Modern Art," he told the commissioners, "and I think we may have it."¹³⁰

The design continued to undergo refinements in the spring of 1978 before final approval by the National Capital Planning Commission at its April 6 meeting. One sticking point was the disposition of the trees along Jefferson Drive. A compromise to resolve concerns over views along the Eighth Street cross-axis between the National Archives and the Hirshhorn Museum came in the form of Collins's replacement of his initial line of eight ginkgo trees along the street with six smaller trees between two pairs of gingkoes. The smaller trees, initially identified by Collins as Russian olive trees, could be kept below the 25-foot limit the Joint Committee on Landmarks sought, while the tall gingkoes could still lend the tracery of their branches to certain views of the concrete exterior wall of the museum while framing views along the axis.¹³¹ The rearrangement of the street level trees diminished whatever shade the gingkoes might have contributed to the garden. A second alteration was the return of the north stairs, reduced in size and placed between the accessible ramps. It is not clear what caused the reintroduction of the stairs, besides their circulation function, but they may have been seen as an additional reinforcement of the Eighth Street axis. Both these changes can be seen in a July 1978 plan of the sculpture garden by OFPES. (Figure 22) Eliminating the stairs was apparently still being considered as late as January 1979, just before the first phase of construction was scheduled to begin. Hirshhorn Director Lerner made the final decision, calling the north stairs "an integral part of the design."¹³²

¹²⁹ U.S. Commission of Fine Arts, Transcript of Meeting, January 19, 1978, 11.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 13.

¹³¹ Conrad to Reiss, April 7, 1978, Smithsonian Archives, record unit 510, box 15.

¹³² Shannon to Reiss, Memorandum: Hirshhorn Museum Sculpture Garden, January 15, 1979, Smithsonian Museum Archives.

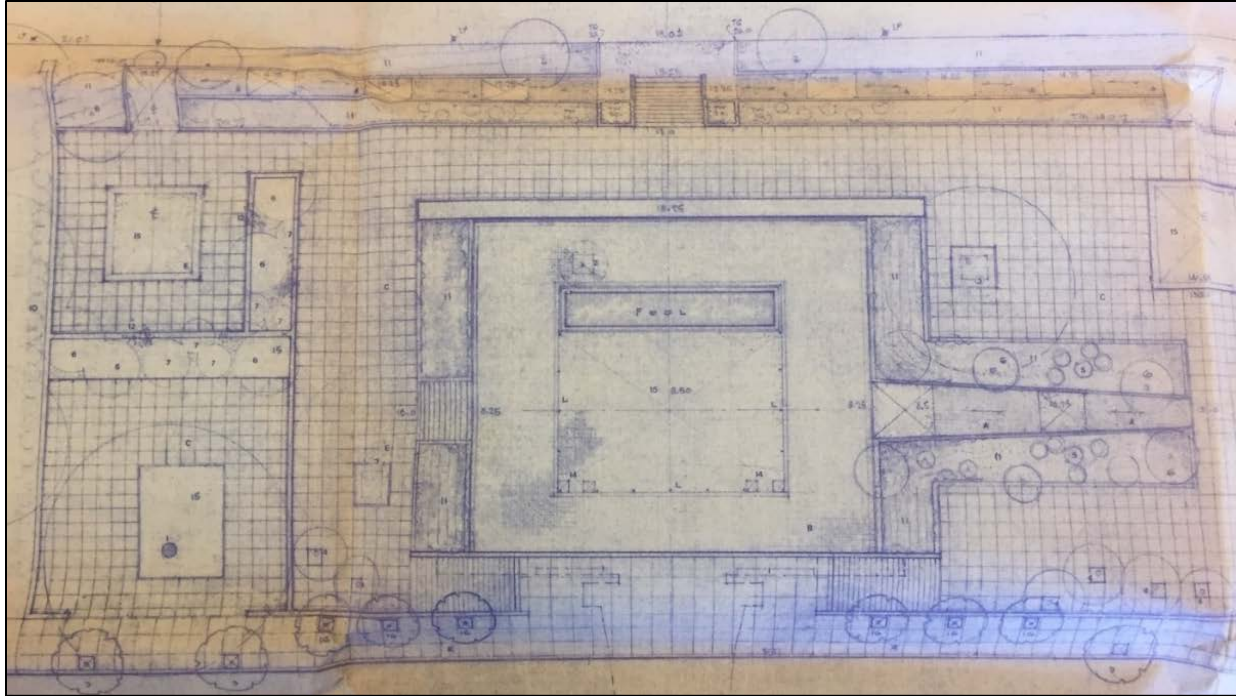


Figure 22 – Collins reintroduced the north stairs (reduced in size) by the summer of 1978, as seen in this July plan. (Smithsonian Institution Archives.)

Phased Construction

By the fall of 1978, the Smithsonian had hired E/A Design Group to produce construction drawings and supervise the phased construction of the redesigned sculpture garden.¹³³ Based on correspondence and documentation produced by E/A Design Group (an 80 percent review submission and a “Project Manual,” dated December 18, 1978), it is clear that some decisions had not yet been made or would be altered before construction started on the first phase in the spring of 1979. The project manual, for instance, still called for slate paving at the intermediate level, which was never implemented.¹³⁴ Since the first two phases of the work included the lateral ramps from the Mall, the two raised, sodded sculpture bases, the ramp between the intermediate and lower levels, and the planters associated with that ramp and with the facing stairs, the paving decision could be delayed.

One decision made just prior to the initial phase of construction involved the relationship of the ramps to the landscape immediately surrounding it. The rendering of the ramps reviewed by CFA on January 19, 1978, included no walls or railings along any of the ramps or stairs. (Figure 19) In the model, low curbs constituted the transition from the north ramps to the planted areas, and the plan includes transitional elements that may be curbing as well. The issue had not been resolved by early September 1978, according to a memorandum from Exhibits Director Shannon to Lerner reporting the results of a meeting that included Shannon, Phillip Reiss of OFPES, and E/A Design Group. The participants in the

¹³³ E/A Design Group, “Revisions to the Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.: 80% Review Submission,” n.d., Smithsonian Institution Archives. Associated with this document is a cost estimate dated September 1978.

¹³⁴ E/A Design Group, “Project Manual: Modifications for the Handicapped, Hirshhorn Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.,” prepared for Smithsonian Institution, Office of Facilities Planning and Engineering Services, December 18, 1978, SI Archives, acc. 94-035, box 7, 01000-1 – 010002.

meeting concluded that the building code associated with the accessibility regulations required two-inch high curbs on the ramps, six inches if safety lights were to be installed. The code also required handrails along the ramps. Shannon noted that Collins preferred that the ramps have no curbs and that “we” – presumably Collins, the Hirshhorn, or the Smithsonian or all three – preferred no railings. The group decided that the ramps would be designed to be able to include railings should they be determined necessary. “All of the above,” Shannon wrote Lerner, “will be gone over with Lester Collins.”¹³⁵ Drawings detailing low walls along the north and east ramps and the west stairs are included among those prepared by E/A Design Group and OFPES, as well as railings for all the stairs.¹³⁶ It appears, then, that E/A Design Group and OFPES designed the means to satisfy the building code with input from Collins and the reluctant agreement of both the landscape architect and the Hirshhorn. Drawings and correspondence show that sleeves to hold the railings were constructed when the ramps and stairs were built, but the railings were not installed until Phase III. As built, aluminum railings were installed, later replaced by bronze railings.¹³⁷

The type of surface materials to be used in the garden remained undetermined until the last construction phase. A decision had not yet been made by August 5, 1980, when Reiss met with E/A Design Group at the site to discuss the paving along with other issues. Reiss reported to Lerner on August 6 that “brick type 8 x 8 pavers . . . of the same or similar color and texture of the basket or herring[bone] weave that has been selected for the lower level” appeared to be the most “reasonable and acceptable” alternative to the flagstone that Collins had proposed for the intermediate level. At issue seems to have been cost: In the summer of 1980, an increase in the cost of slate from \$12 per square foot to \$15 raised concern that the Smithsonian would not be able to afford that material.¹³⁸ The cost issue may also have led to another change in surface materials in the garden – the substitution of sod for portions of the paved areas. Benjamin Forgey, by the time of the sculpture garden’s reopening a writer for the *Washington Post*, gave the reason for the inclusion of sod panels in place of paving on both the intermediate and lower levels as the high cost of flagstone paving.¹³⁹ Collins stated in the January 19, 1978, CFA meeting that sod cost \$2 per square yard, so using grass may have been another way for the Smithsonian to reduce costs.¹⁴⁰

The first dated plan showing the revised design with square brick pavers on the intermediate level, basket weave brick on the lower level, and sod on both, from E/A Design Group and OFPES, bears the date of February 27, 1981, just before Phase III of construction was scheduled to begin. (Figure 23) A drawing by Collins, however, was probably prepared before that date, between the August 1980 meeting and the 1981 construction drawing. (Figure 24) The labels, in Collins’s handwriting, identify large areas of sod replacing some of the paving of earlier plans. The location of the sodded and paved panels and their balance in Collins’s drawing served to further refine spatial relationships in the garden

¹³⁵ Shannon to Lerner, September 6, 1978, Smithsonian Archives, record unit 510, box 15.

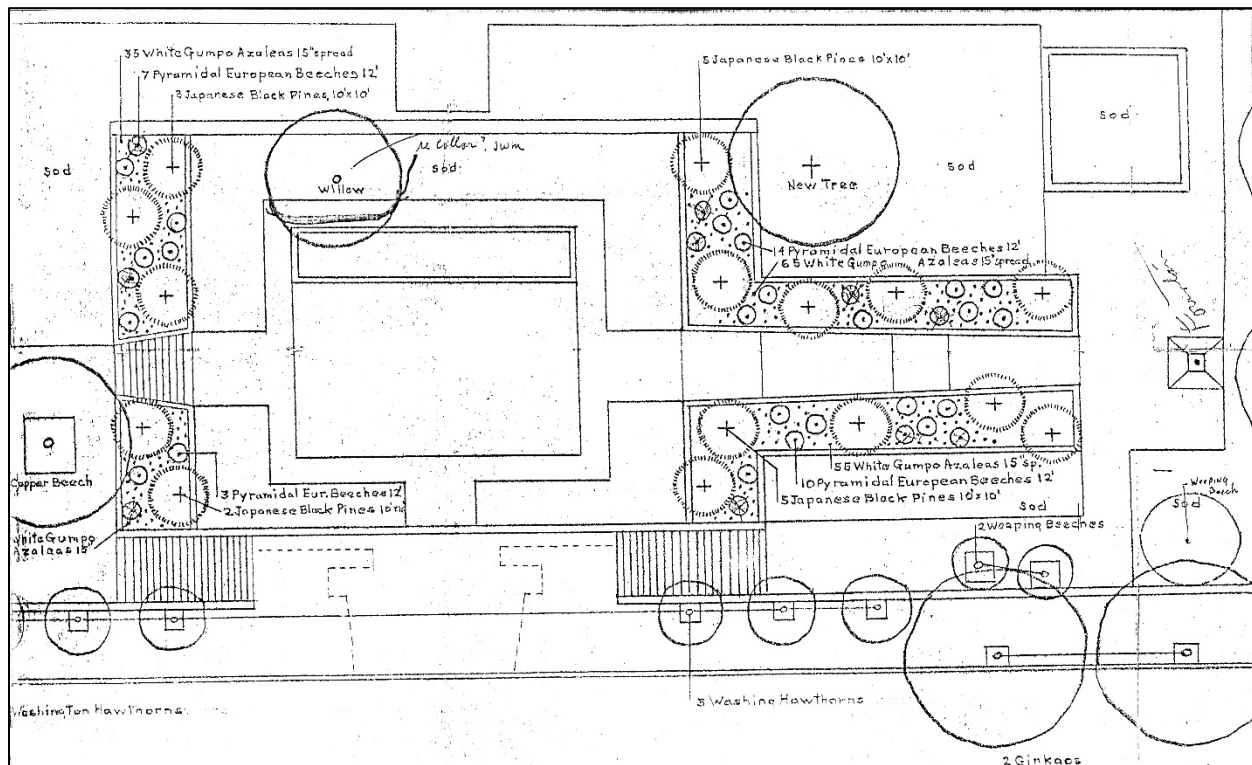
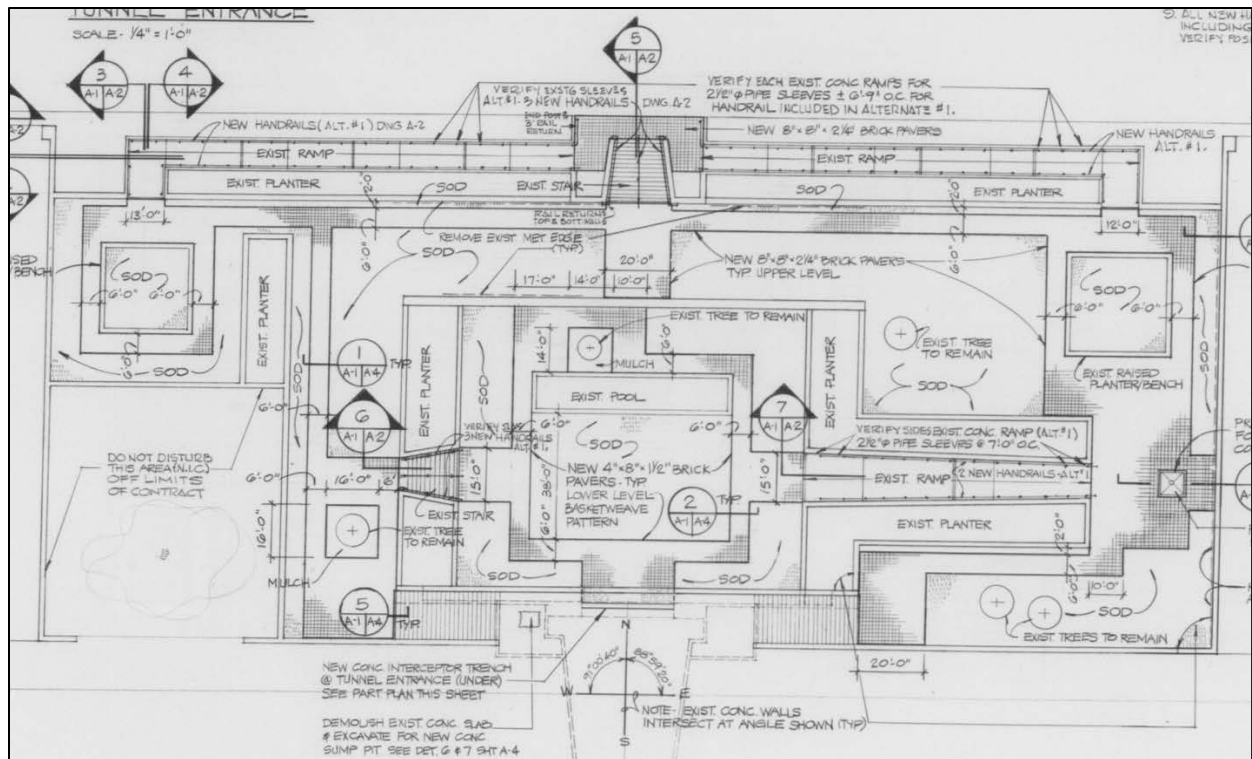
¹³⁶ E/A Design Group and Smithsonian Institution Office of Facilities Planning & Engineering Services, “Modifications for the Handicapped – Hirshhorn Sculpture Garden,” Architectural Drawings, December 18, 1978, February 12, 1979, January 18, 1980, and January 29, 1981, Smithsonian Institution Archives.

¹³⁷ Reiss to Lerner, June 26, 1980; Reiss to Weil, August 1, 1980. Smithsonian Archives, accession 04-149, box 3.

¹³⁸ Weil to Lerner, August 5, 1980; Reiss to Lerner, August 6, 1980, Smithsonian Archives, accession 04-149, box 3.

¹³⁹ Benjamin Forgey, “Tending the Garden,” *Washington Post*, September 12, 1981, B4.

¹⁴⁰ U.S. Commission of Fine Arts, Transcript of Meeting, January 19, 1978, 15. The correspondence indicates that A/E design was to prepare a presentation on potential surfaces for Lerner, who would make the final decision. The 8 by 8-inch pavers ultimately installed at the lower level were one of the choices.



Figures 23 and 24 – The 1981 plan (top) shows the sod panels as installed. The Collins plan (bottom) likely preceded it. (Smithsonian Institution Archives)

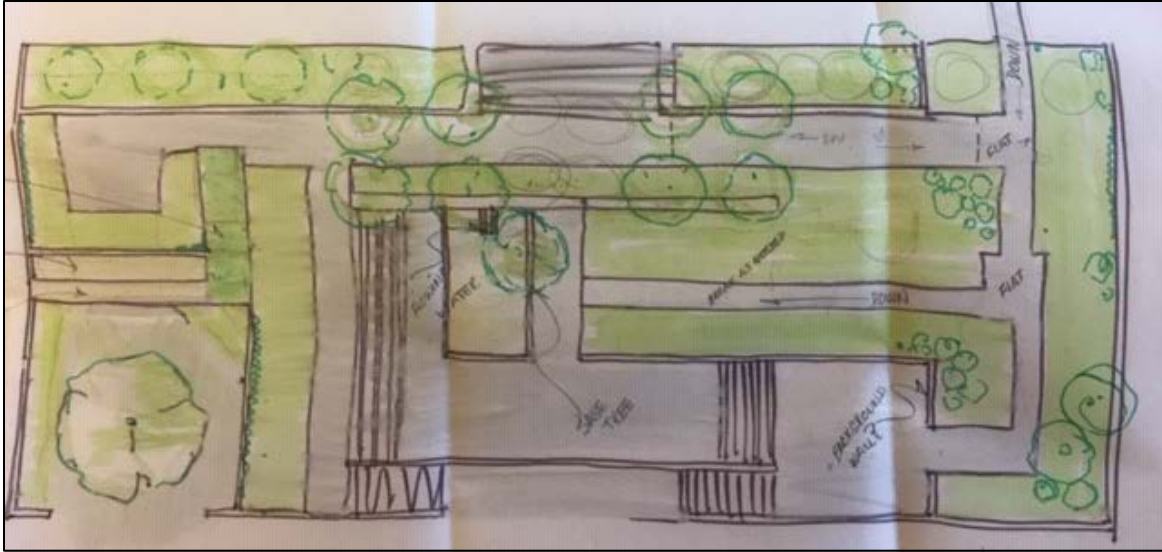


Figure 25 – One of the Smithsonian’s in-house designs for the garden, likely dating to 1976. (Smithsonian Institution Archives)

as well as circulation paths. The drawing suggests at least one fixed location for sculpture (at the base of the north stairs), and the narrower circulation paths created additional vistas. The separation of the raised pedestal in the northeast (set in paving) from the sodded area around the new tree adjacent on the west created two rooms, where the earlier plan had envisioned one. The locations of the grass panels in Collins’s drawing generally reflect the design as constructed, with some slight changes in the southeast corner, including the area around the fountain.

The two drawings resemble in approach, if not in detail, one of the plans the Smithsonian prepared in-house in the fall of 1976 in its use of grass along the circulation paths in the garden. (Figure 25) Collins told Forgey that “the decision to go with grass” increased the excitement at the Smithsonian for the other plants that the landscape architect planned to use. Multiple participants in the garden’s redesign seemed, then, to have had a hand in the final determination of surface materials, and the collaboration served multiple purposes, reducing the cost, varying the spatial organization in plan, and providing some satisfaction to those who had worked on the in-house design.

Collins’s circa fall 1980 drawing also finalized the planting scheme outside the garden wall along Jefferson Drive. NCPC Executive Director Charles Conrad’s April 7 letter had informed Reiss of the commission’s approval of the design for the sculpture garden, but his report noted that the “shrubby” nature of the Russian olive trees Collins had proposed between the pairs of ginkgoes would require pruning to allow pedestrians to walk beneath them.¹⁴¹ The fall 1980 drawing depicts six hawthorn trees where the Russian olives had been, and they appear on the Smithsonian’s 1983 accessions plan of the garden’s actual plantings. (Figure 26) Collins appears to have replaced the olives with hawthorns to avoid the maintenance problem that Conrad had foreseen.

During the first phase of construction, in the spring of 1979, only the north ramps and their landscaping were constructed. The rest of the garden remained open as it was. In the second phase, a year later,

¹⁴¹ Conrad to Reiss, April 7, 1978, Smithsonian Archives, record unit 510, box 15.

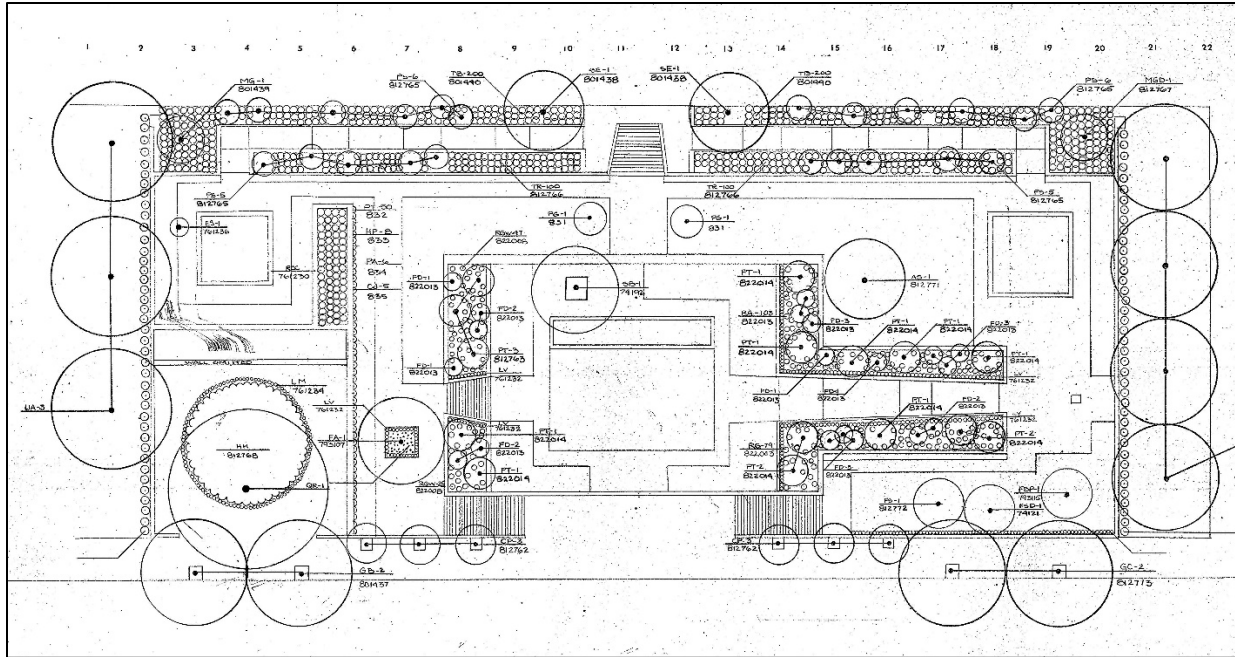


Figure 26 – The Smithsonian’s 1983 accessions planting plan identifies the species of specimens in the garden. The six small trees between the pairs of ginkgo trees on the south boundary are identified as hawthorns. (Smithsonian Archives)

construction focused on the raised, sodded pedestals, the east ramp from the intermediate level to the lower level, and the concrete planters associated with the ramp and with the stairs between the intermediate and lower levels. Establishing the vegetation in these planters was also a part of this phase of the work, and there was at least one instance of a problem, when two beech trees that arrived in an “unacceptable condition” were planted in “inadequately prepared sites,” according to a memorandum from Reiss to Lerner on August 6, 1980.¹⁴²

E/A Design Group’s “Project Manual” for the work, dated December 18, 1978, states that it was responsible for, among other things, “removal of existing landscaping,” “underground drainage,” “sand and gravel sub-base,” and “topsoil and mulch.”¹⁴³ Preparation of the site would therefore seem to have been its responsibility. The beech trees in question may have been copper beeches, and Collins seems to have been responsible for their acquisition, since on July 16, 1980, Joe Shannon had written to Collins to express his concern that two copper beeches had arrived in poor condition. Shannon emphasized that “future plantings are to be received in optimum conditions and are to be placed in hospitable earth.”¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² Reiss to Lerner, August 6, 1980. Smithsonian Archives, accession 04-149, box 3. The Office of Horticulture provided new soil specifications on August 19 that mixed one third top soil, one third German or Canadian peat moss, and one third sharp sand. (Buckler, Director, Office of Horticulture, to Kenneth E. Shaw, Acting Director, Office of Design and Construction, August 19, 1980, Smithsonian Archives, accession 04-149, box 3.)

¹⁴³ E/A Design Group, “Project Manual: Modifications for the Handicapped, Hirshhorn Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.,” prepared for Smithsonian Institution, Office of Facilities Planning and Engineering Services, December 18, 1978, SI Archives, acc. 94-035, box 7.

¹⁴⁴ Reiss to Weil, August 1, 1980. Smithsonian Archives, accession 04-149, box 3.

In general, however, the Hirshhorn itself took responsibility for selection of specific trees specimens for the garden, based on the plans prepared by Collins. Shannon had written to Buckler on February 7, 1979, that Hirshhorn executives Lerner, Weil, and Kirkpatrick had communicated this approach to him “in the strongest terms.” Trees would be purchased through Hirshhorn funds, rather than through the “normal ‘low-bid’” federal purchasing procedures, with the Hirshhorn making the final decision, Shannon informed Buckler.¹⁴⁵ The Office of Horticulture remained involved in the process, however; Program Assistant John W. Monday had inspected possible specimens to be purchased in Pennsylvania and Virginia in the spring of 1980 and sought a decision from the Hirshhorn on which to acquire.¹⁴⁶

A decision was also made during the summer of 1980 to close the tunnel between the plaza and the garden. Correspondence between the Smithsonian’s Office of Protection Services and Hirshhorn Deputy Director Stephen Weil in July of that year discuss the materials (snow fence or plywood) that should be used for the closure.¹⁴⁷ A photograph from the following year indicates that painted plywood was chosen. (Figure 27)

Work progressed on the third phase of construction through the summer of 1981, and the garden was available for the Smithsonian Regents dinner in the middle of September.¹⁴⁸ Finishing touches, especially planting, however, continued. This work included planting ginkgo, cherry, redwood, and hawthorn trees



Figure 27 – This 1981 photograph illustrates the slow pace of establishing plantings in the sculpture garden. (Smithsonian Institution Archives)

¹⁴⁵ Shannon to Buckler, Memorandum: Plant Purchases. February 7, 1979, Smithsonian Institution Archives.

¹⁴⁶ Shannon to Weil, April 17, 1980. Smithsonian Archives, accession 04-149, box 3.

¹⁴⁷ Weil to Nancy Kirkpatrick, July 10, 1980, Smithsonian Archives, accession 04-149, box 3.

¹⁴⁸ Benjamin Forgey, “Tending the Garden,” *Washington Post*, September 12, 1981, B1.

in November 1981 and “six large trees” in March 1982. White ‘Gumpo’ azaleas and spreading yew were also placed in the planters in the spring and summer of 1982.¹⁴⁹

The time it took to complete the plantings explains thin appearance of the vegetation in early photographs of the redesigned sculpture garden. (Figure 27) Within a few years, however, the effects Collins intended began to appear. (Figures 28 and 29) At the end of August 1998, Hirshhorn Director James T. Demettrion wrote to Nancy Bechtol, assistant director of the Smithsonian’s Horticultural Services Division, to tell her how well the plantings looked during previous spring and summer and encouraged her and her colleagues to be “even more adventurous” in the their choice of plantings for the next planting season.¹⁵⁰ By the early 2000s, the effect of the “loose green walls” Collins had foreseen was more pronounced. (Figures 30 and 31) Peeks of distant sculpture could be gained by looking between the trees or across the various elevations of the garden, as Walter Beck and Collins had done at Innisfree. (Figure 32)

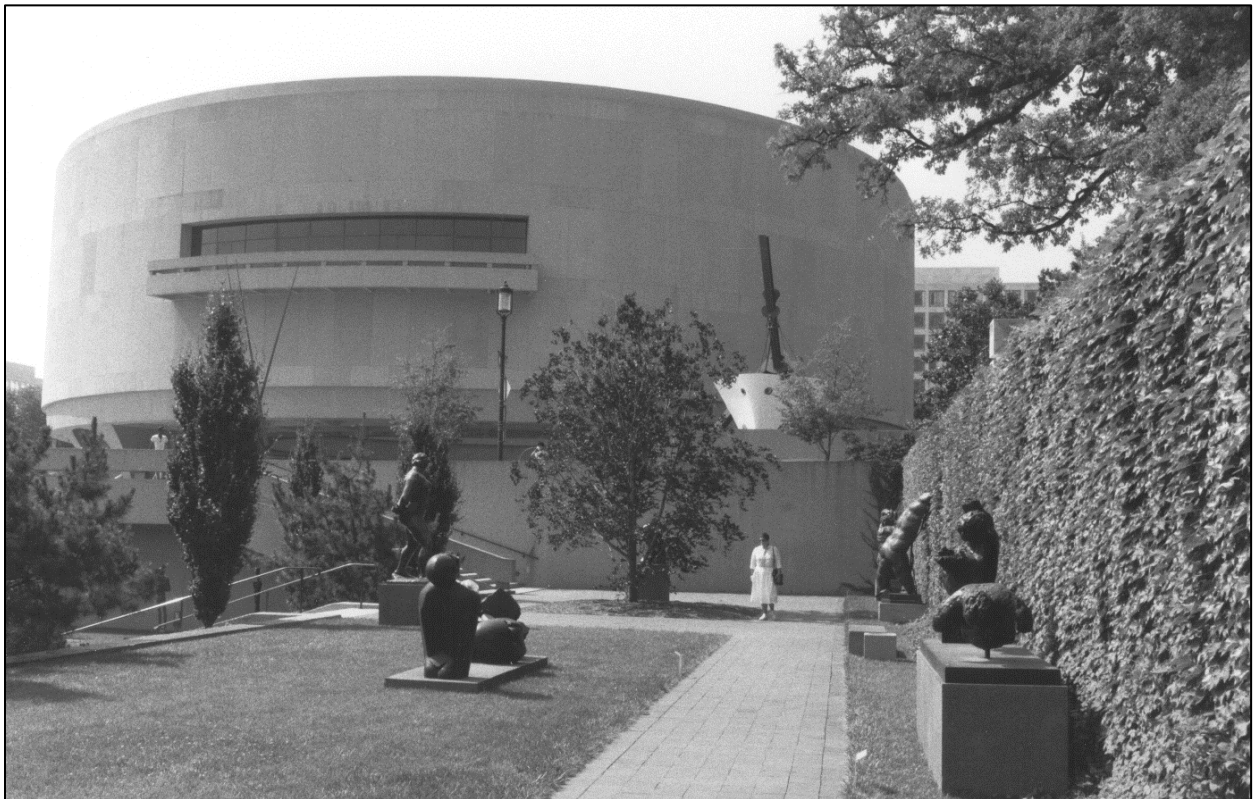


Figure 28 – This 1986 view south on the west intermediate level suggests how the perimeter trees and vine-covered walls created open-air rooms for sculpture. (Smithsonian Institution Archives)

¹⁴⁹ Office of Horticulture. Monthly Status Report; Operations Meetings, May 19 and August 17, 1982, SI Archives, acc. 94-035, box 7.

¹⁵⁰ James T. Demettrion to Nancy Bechtol, Assistant Director, Horticulture Services Division, Office of Physical Plant, August 25, 1998, Smithsonian Institution Archives, acc. 05-245, box 1.



Figure 29 – By 1993, the use of trees to break up the garden space is evident, although the vegetation has not matured. (Smithsonian Institution Archives)



Figure 30 – Maturing plants enhanced the enclosure of the outdoor rooms, as seen in this 2007 photograph. (But note the dying pyramidal beech on the left near the stairs.) (Wikimedia Commons, Hirshhorn Museum DC 2007 024.jpg)



Figure 31 – Vistas planned by Collins are still present, although altered, as in this view along the lower ramp toward a sculpture where a fountain was originally located. (Lee F. Mindel, *Architectural Digest*, September 30, 2014)

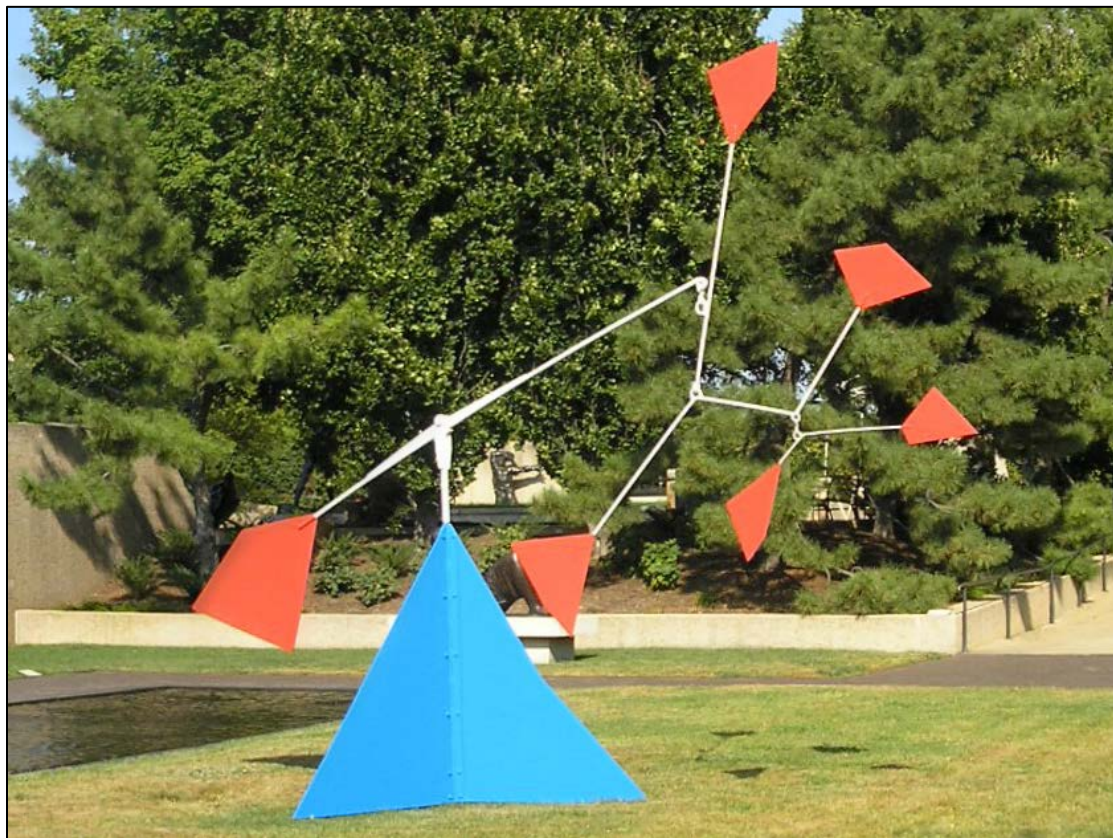


Figure 32 – Glimpses of distant sculptures could also be seen through the loose green walls. (Wikimedia Commons, Hirshhorn Museum DC 2007.jpg)

Changes to the Hirshhorn Sculpture Garden since 1981

Plantings

Later photographs indicate that the Smithsonian had difficulty maintaining some of the plantings Collins had prescribed for the site. At least a few problems occurred relatively early. One of Collins's proposed plants was lost before the garden was completed, when a weeping beech was removed during the third quarter of 1981.¹⁵¹ A marked-up planting plan indicates that two of the six hawthorns along the south wall were dead, as were two unidentified trees flanking the paved area opposite the north stairs.¹⁵² (Figure 29) The mark-up also recommends replacement of one of the Japanese black pines on the west bank and removal of an Alberta spruce (not called for in Collins's planting plan). Other notations indicate a need for a source of Mount Fuji cherry trees and more yews to fill in gaps. It is not known whether sources for cherries and yews were needed to replace original specimens or to fulfill the original plan. The plan probably dates to around 1993 or later. A photograph from that date shows one hawthorn missing and both trees at the base of the north stairs in place.

The microclimate of the space may have been the most important contributor to the difficulties with some of the trees, including the Japanese black pines and the pyramidal beeches, according to Smithsonian Gardens landscape architect Bill Donnelly and arborist Jake Hendee. In an interview, Donnelly and Hendee pointed out that these trees were widely available and used throughout the region when Collins made his redesign, although they were on the southern edge of their growing area. Over the years, it was learned that the two species did not fare well in the heat, especially when planted in an exposed area. The sunken location of the garden and the effects of climate change exacerbated these issues. Hendee said that, today, the black pines and the pyramidal beeches would not be at the top of a list of recommended plantings for the garden, although similar species better adapted to the conditions and able to fulfill the same functions that Collins had envisioned are available.¹⁵³

Other factors may also have contributed to the problems with the plantings. One is funding for the project. Although plant purchases came out of the Hirshhorn's funds, in order to provide the freedom to pursue the best specimens of the plants that Collins's plan called for, the remainder of the implementation of the project was paid for through the notoriously tight federal budget process.¹⁵⁴ As previously discussed, the Smithsonian perpetually juggled construction decisions due to lack of funds, and finances played a role in determining the type and amount of paving used in the sculpture garden.¹⁵⁵ Office of Horticulture Director James Buckler also claimed in an undated memorandum written during construction, that various details had not been taken care of, including drainage and

¹⁵¹ Office of Horticulture, Quarterly Reports, July-September 1981, SI Archives, acc. 94-035, box 7.

¹⁵² Three accession planting plans were found in research for this report. The only dated plan is from July 14, 1983. The marked-up plan matches an undated plan, but both differ slightly from the dated plan. Since the dated plan does not acknowledge the removal of certain specimens noted on the marked-up plan, it is assumed to be the earliest plan, with the marked-up plan the latest.

¹⁵³ Telephone interview with Bill Donnelly and Jake Hendee, Smithsonian Gardens, November 25, 2019, conducted by the authors.

¹⁵⁴ Shannon to Buckler, Memorandum: Plant Purchases. February 7, 1979, Smithsonian Institution Archives.

¹⁵⁵ Reiss to Lerner, June 26, 1980; Weil to Reiss, June 27, 1980; Reiss to Weil, August 1, 1980, Smithsonian Archives, accession 04-149, box 3.

underground utilities.¹⁵⁶ In an interview, former Hirshhorn exhibits director Ed Scheisser stated that poor soil preparation and lack of good drainage contributed to the problems.¹⁵⁷ Nancy Bechtol, of the Horticultural Services Division, told Benjamin Forgey in 1999 that some of the problems with the plantings were due to the fact that the garden was “never piped for irrigation or drainage.”¹⁵⁸

Since at least some of these elements (irrigation, drainage, soil preparation, underground utilities) had been included in E/A Design Group’s project manual, prepared in December 1978 before construction began, and construction details for them had been worked out, it would seem that lack of funding may have at least partially been the cause for the omissions.¹⁵⁹ No documentation was found during research that attributed the issues to E/A Design Group. According to Forgey, the irrigation and drainage issues were being addressed at the time of his interview with Bechtol.¹⁶⁰

Other losses of vegetation included the willow tree by the pool that remained from the Bunshaft sculpture garden, which was removed around 1984, after it was discovered that its roots had pierced the pool, causing a leak.¹⁶¹ Photographs indicate that the tree in this location has been replaced more than once since that time. The oak tree in the southwest corner at street level, which existed when Bunshaft planned the original garden, was removed due to poor health in 1988 and replaced with sculpture. The current work in this location, Mark di Suvero’s *Are years What? (for Marianne Moore)* was installed after its acquisition in 1999.¹⁶² Collins had placed two weeping willows flanking the entrance from the Mall, which were removed due to their poor condition in the early 1990s.¹⁶³ Some of the changes to the plantings are more difficult to trace. Healthy white ‘Gumpo’ azaleas appear in the west bank planters in a July 1988 photograph by Swiss photographer Erling Mandelmann.¹⁶⁴ It is difficult to tell from photographs discovered in research for this report how long they lasted, although they do not exist in this location today. Some of the cherry trees along the north ramps and the hawthorns and ginkgo trees on the south are also gone, as is the copper beech at the bottom of the west run of the lateral stairs. The hawthorns, ginkoes, and copper beech were all present in the 1993 photograph. A small number of crape myrtle were added along the north ramps and remain in place. The important “structural” trees in Collins’s plan – the Japanese black pines and the pyramidal beeches – continued to perform their function as green walls for the outdoor rooms into the twenty-first century and in some

¹⁵⁶ JRB [James R. Buckler], Memorandum: HMSG Handicap Access Landscape Plans, n.d. (circa 1979?), Smithsonian Institution Archives.

¹⁵⁷ Telephone interview with Ed Scheisser, former exhibits director, August 9, 2019, conducted by Sharon Park and Carly Bond, Smithsonian Institution, Division of Architectural History and Historic Preservation.

¹⁵⁸ Benjamin Forgey, “Splendor on the Grass,” *Washington Post*, October 16, 1999, C1, C5.

¹⁵⁹ E/A Design Group, “Project Manual: Modifications for the Handicapped, Hirshhorn Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.,” prepared for Smithsonian Institution, Office of Facilities Planning and Engineering Services, December 18, 1978, SI Archives, acc. 94-035, box 7.

¹⁶⁰ Interview with Joe Shannon, former Chief of Exhibition and Design, HMSG, 1975-1986, Smithsonian Institution, August 16 (in person) and 19 (phone), 2019, conducted by Sharon Park and Carly Bond, Smithsonian Institution, Division of Architectural History and Historic Preservation.

¹⁶¹ Buckler to Frank Underwood, Building Manager, Hirshhorn Museum, October 15, 1984. Smithsonian Institution Archives, acc. 05-245, box 1.

¹⁶² Buckler to Demetron, August 29, 1988, Smithsonian Archives, accession 04-155, box 3; Marzella, National Register of Historic Places Registration Form: Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, 8:37.

¹⁶³ Meehan to Demetron, February 25, 1991. Smithsonian Archives, accession 04-155, box 3.

¹⁶⁴ “Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden á Washington,” Erling Mandelmann, July 1988, Getty Images no. 955427054, <https://www.gettyimages.com/photos/955427054>, accessed November 5, 2019.

locations as late as 2017, according to photographs in the draft National Register documentation for the museum.¹⁶⁵ Some of these trees represent replacements for the original specimens.

All of the pyramidal beeches are now gone. In recent years, neither the Japanese black pines nor the pyramidal beeches were replaced when their health failed. Although no set policy exists for the replacement of trees in the sculpture garden, according to Al Masino, Director of Exhibits, Design, and Special Projects at the Hirshhorn, in some cases the decisions not to replant were made to better showcase larger sculptures that the museum began to acquire in the mid-1990s. As an example, he stated that the Hirshhorn requested that the black pines in the planters between the lower and intermediate levels not be replanted when they were recently removed in order to provide clear vistas and improved presentation of Dan Graham's *For Gordon Bunshaft*, installed in 2008, and Tony Cragg's *Subcommittee* (2019).¹⁶⁶ (Figure 33) In the early part of the twenty-first century, the Hirshhorn undertook a reconsideration of the entire garden to explore how it might be altered to better accommodate large scale sculptures after a period of not purchasing large scale works that didn't fit comfortably in the existing garden. In 2006, Danish-born artist Olafur Eliasson provided a master plan for the museum campus to accomplish this goal, but the plan was not implemented.

Other recent alterations to the garden have accommodated environmental and performance art, twentieth-first-century phenomena at the Hirshhorn that has accelerated in the last five years,



Figure 33 – View of *For Gordon Bunshaft* (left) and *Subcommittee* (right) on the lower level of the garden. Collins's Japanese black pines and pyramidal beeches had grown in the planter at the end of the grass panel in the foreground before being removed for poor health. (Robinson & Associates, Inc., 2019)

¹⁶⁵ Marzella, National Register of Historic Places Registration Form: Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden (draft), 9:88-89.

¹⁶⁶ Al Masino, Director of Exhibits, Design, and Special Projects, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, correspondence with the authors, January 27, 2020.

according to Masino. A 2003 sound installation titled *Sunset Song* added speakers and other sound equipment to the northwest corner room, and additional plantings were installed at about the same time. In 2007, Yoko Ono donated a white-flowering Japanese dogwood as a “wish tree,” which was planted in the southeast corner of the garden’s intermediate level near the base of the east range of the south stairs. Visitors are invited to write wishes on tags and attach them to the tree’s branches.¹⁶⁷

Today, the number of species planted in the sculpture garden totals more than forty, as opposed to the roughly two dozen that were planted in 1981. This is partly due to the addition of grasses and other plantings in areas formerly devoted to sod or trees and a general expansion of varieties planted. The extent of areas devoted to vegetation, however, remains generally the same as it was in 1981.

Sculptural Display and Built Features

The Hirshhorn began seeking additional space for the display of sculpture outside the sculpture garden’s walls very soon after the redesigned space opened. In the fall of 1983, Smithsonian officials met with representatives of the National Park Service seeking permission to place a small number of sculptures just outside the east boundary wall, beneath the elm trees along the Seventh Street sidewalk. There seems to have been some confusion regarding jurisdiction over this area, as well as the corresponding space on the west side of the sculpture garden (referred to today as the “aprons”). The issue was resolved in 1993, when the Smithsonian and the National Park Service signed a memorandum of understanding related to boundaries of all their adjoining properties. The map associated with this MOU shows the aprons within the boundaries of the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden.¹⁶⁸ In her book on the sculpture garden, Hirshhorn curator Valerie Fletcher states that no sculpture was displayed in the aprons until 1993, after the MOU resolved the issue.¹⁶⁹

Other alterations since 1981 include the installation of a bubbler fountain in the rectangular pool. Such a fountain first appears in photographs around 1984. It is possible that the fountain was added when work was undertaken to resolve the leak caused by the weeping willow north of the pool in 1984. Water lilies were established in the reflecting pool at about the same time. Collins’s fountain at the head of the ramp ceased functioning sometime during the 1990s, and the Hirshhorn determined to place a pedestal and sculpture on that focal point before the end of the decade.¹⁷⁰ The original metal grates for the fountain can be seen beneath the pedestal. Other alterations include new signage at the entrances and at the corners of the garden (first undertaken in 1999).¹⁷¹ In the early 2000s, the former tunnel area was rehabilitated for use as ARTLAB+, a multimedia art education program. The work included a glass and metal curtain wall with doors replacing the plywood across the tunnel opening facing the garden. Work at about this time may have also included additional basket-weave brick paving (not quite matching the original) to accommodate the curtain wall and to replace areas of sod that grew poorly in the shaded area. Additional paving within the grass square at the lower level was installed to accompany the installation of *For Gordon Bunshaft* in 2008.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Memorandum of Understanding between the Smithsonian Institution and the Secretary of the Interior, Acting by and through the Regional Director of the National Capital Region, National Park Service, November 18, 1993, Smithsonian Institution, Office of Architectural History and Historic Preservation.

¹⁶⁹ Fletcher, *A Garden for Art*, n. 7, 30.

¹⁷⁰ Masino, correspondence.

¹⁷¹ Exhibits to Fletcher, July 31, 1998. Smithsonian Institution Archives, acc. 05-245, box 1.

Exhibits director Masino also recalled concerns about the infrastructure of the garden – both the original construction and the alterations from 1981 – beginning in the late 1980s. The Hirshhorn commissioned an investigation into the condition of the walls, drainage, and other features in 2004. The work was undertaken by SOM, Robert Silman Associates, and Wiles Mensch Corporation. The study, completed in 2005, found extensive cracking along the tops of the garden walls due to lack of reinforcement and the lack of crowns or slopes during the original construction. Both were intended to limit water penetration into the walls. The protective features had been called for in the original construction documents, but not executed. Minor cracks were determined to have resulted from low air content in the concrete mix. The report stated that, although not an immediate threat to the walls' integrity, lack of attention to the situation could result in further water penetration and rusting of the reinforcing steel within that could compromise the walls' integrity in the future. Short-, medium to long-, and permanent solutions were offered.¹⁷² Visual inspection of the walls indicates that at least some of the cracks were filled, one of the short-term fixes. Additional testing of the sculpture garden walls was undertaken more recently, resulting in a 2019 report that also identified moisture penetration as a component of the cracking, spalling, and delamination of the walls. The recent report, by Callison RTKL, identified the cause of the problems as alkali-silica reaction (ASR), a condition that might be slowed by reducing the moisture content of the walls but not stopped.¹⁷³

Critical Reception

The draft National Register nomination for the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden notes that the redesigned garden was “received warmly” when it reopened in September 1981, although Benjamin Forgey’s review in the *Washington Post* is the only article contemporary with the reopening the document cites.¹⁷⁴ The *Post*’s critic understood Collins’s intentions and praised his results. “What was needed was a sense of inviting intimacy,” Forgey wrote, “which is precisely what Collins has managed to provide by breaking up the space in an orderly way with brick walkways that echo the basic rectangular configuration of the plot, with a profusion of new trees and plantings and, above all, thick carpets of grass.” Further, Forgey understood the influence of Collins’s redesign on circulation through the site and the variety of views offered: “The divisions of the space provide essential accents; artworks pop in and out of view as the spectator moves about the space, and yet they are given plenty of room when they need it.” Upon seeing the lateral ramps, Forgey described their location in Collins’s plan as seeming “inevitable.”¹⁷⁵

Theodore Osmundson, in his review of the sculpture garden phenomenon of the period, written at the beginning of 1983, also appreciated Collins’s solutions to the problems presented by the original Bunshaft garden. “The original garden was largely removed and extensively rebuilt in 1980 to a much improved scheme by landscape architect Lester Collins,” Osmundson wrote. “The terraced changes of

¹⁷² Masino, correspondence; Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, Robert Silman Associates, Wiles Mensch Corporation, and Project Management Services, “Smithsonian Institution, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Sculpture Garden Study – Final Report,” December 7, 2004 (Revised March 3, 2005), Smithsonian Institution, Office of Architectural History and Historic Preservation, 5-18.

¹⁷³ CallisonRTKL, “HMSG Testing Report,” March 4, 2019, Smithsonian Institution, Office of Architectural History and Historic Preservation, 12-13.

¹⁷⁴ Marzella, National Register of Historic Places Registration Form: Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden (draft), 8:37.

¹⁷⁵ Benjamin Forgey, “Tending the Garden,” *Washington Post*, September 12, 1981.

grade and planting are far more sympathetic to showing sculpture. With the exception of the dead-ended, high-walled 'gallery' at the west end [northwest corner], . . . the display spaces and pedestrian circulation have been greatly improved." The remaining problems of the garden Osmundson attributes to flaws left over from the Bunshaft design – the "high-walled 'gallery'" and "the central portion, with its strangely out-of-scale pool, lawn and weeping willow." Osmundson also noted that "the nature of the site precludes expansion of the highly popular garden."¹⁷⁶ Francesca Cigola, in her 2013 survey of the nation's sculpture gardens, observed that Collins's work at the Hirshhorn "highlighted its original beauty and made it a small jewel of a 'park within the park'" of the National Mall.¹⁷⁷

Osmundson called attention to the potential problem of crowding at the garden, an observation made by other commentators. Michael Lancaster, in his entry for sculpture gardens in the 1986 *Oxford Companion to Gardens*, stated that the Hirshhorn garden suffered "from overcrowding both of people and design elements."¹⁷⁸ "Design elements" might be construed in a number of ways, but it could include walls, stairs, ramps, plantings, and the sculptures themselves. Hirshhorn exhibit staff had always been ambitious regarding the number of works it planned to display in the garden. According to Valerie Fletcher, the staff discovered it needed to reduce the number of sculptures planned for the Bunshaft garden to seventy-five through practice placements with Styrofoam models.¹⁷⁹ That target may have also been determined overly ambitious because Benjamin Forgey reported that Collins's redesign of the space increased its capacity from fifty displayed works to seventy-five.¹⁸⁰ Currently, sixty to sixty-five works are on display in the garden at any one time. That is a higher density of works to area than other museum gardens reviewed for this study. (Table 1)

Hirshhorn exhibit directors Shannon and Scheisser identified difficulties in placing sculptures in Collins's garden in a way that created the views they sought. Although Collins's design had reduced the visual problems of the display of sculpture in the Bunshaft garden, "[o]verlapping views," "too many visually chaotic views that distracted from viewing set pieces, other sculptures in the sightlines," and "too many plants" are included in the summaries of comments the exhibit directors made. Their comments and those made by Forgey and Osmundson in their reviews of Collins's redesign reveal two differing ways to view sculpture. Shannon praised a design that "would highlight certain pieces in defined settings." Forgey, on the other hand, felt that, in Collins's redesign, "artworks pop in and out of view as the spectator moves about the space, and yet they are given plenty of room when they need it." The latter sentiment parallels Collins's writing about Innisfree and an understanding of the hide-and-reveal tactic of both Chinese and Japanese gardens. In his book on Innisfree, Collins wrote that "[w]estern gardens are usually designed to embrace a view of the whole," whereas "[t]he traditional Chinese garden is usually designed so that a view of the whole is impossible. . . . The observer walks into a series of episodes."¹⁸¹ At the Hirshhorn, Collins attempted to combine the two approaches, breaking down the

¹⁷⁶ Theodore Osmundson, "Sculpture Garden Garden Sculpture: Designing the Difference," *Landscape Architecture Magazine* 73, no. 1 (January/February 1983), 76.

¹⁷⁷ Cigola, 99.

¹⁷⁸ Michael Lancaster, "Sculpture garden," *The Oxford Companion to Gardens*, Sir Jeffrey and Susan Jellicoe, editors (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 507.

¹⁷⁹ Valerie J. Fletcher, *A Garden for Art* (Washington, D.C.: Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution, 1998), 21.

¹⁸⁰ Benjamin Forgey, "Tending the Garden," *Washington Post*. September 12, 1981.

¹⁸¹ Lester Collins, *Innisfree: An American Garden*, (New York: Sagapress/Harry N. Abrams, 1994), 16.



Figure 34 – Hirshhorn curators learned to use the vistas Collins created to direct views, while also providing glimpses of other sculptures, such as Rodin's *Balzac*, seen through the trees on the left. (Smithsonian Institution Archives, 1986)

space into smaller “galleries” and creating direct views of works in certain locations, on the one hand, while also providing glimpses or long-range views of other works to guide visitor circulation. Despite the seeming contradictions of the two approaches, the Hirshhorn staff developed strategies for placing sculpture that followed the logic of Collins’s design, especially the movement through space it encouraged and the resulting opportunities for defined single views, as well as views encompassing multiple works. The current layout places sculpture at the end of nearly every vista Collins defined, as well as stops along the way and beyond those focal points. (Figure 34)

Evaluation of the Integrity of the 1981 Garden

Introduction

The Secretary of the Interior describes integrity as the ability of a property to convey its significance through its physical resources. The National Register of Historic Places identifies seven aspects of integrity: *location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association*. *Location* is the place where the historic property was constructed or the place where the historic event occurred. *Setting* is the physical environment within and surrounding a property. *Design* is the combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure, and style of a property. *Materials* are the physical elements that were combined or deposited during a particular period of time and in a particular pattern or configuration to form a historic property. *Workmanship* is the physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period in history or prehistory. *Feeling* is a property's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time. *Association* is the direct link between an important historic event or person and a historic property.¹⁸²

According to the Register, "To retain historic integrity a property will always possess several, and usually most, of the aspects."¹⁸³ A basic test of integrity is whether a participant in the historic period, say, Lester Collins himself, would recognize the sculpture garden as it exists today. The following section evaluates each of the seven aspects of integrity through the lens of the Hirshhorn Sculpture Garden's key landscape characteristics, comparing the garden today with conditions upon installation in 1981. The key landscape characteristics of the redesigned garden were determined by looking at Collins's design for the site as developed from the summer of 1977 through at least the fall of 1980 and implemented in three phases between 1979 and 1981. Collins employed the techniques of Chinese and Japanese gardens to solve the problems of Bunshaft's original design for the space and to address the requirements for the outdoor display of sculpture. He used extensive vegetation to add shade, combined vegetation and grade changes to create outdoor rooms in the manner of Chinese "cup" gardens as exhibit spaces, and followed the hide-and-reveal tactic of Asian gardens to draw visitors through the space. Therefore, the key landscape characteristics of the redesigned garden focus on Collins's organization of space within Bunshaft's existing structure to create outdoor rooms, his manipulation of topography and vegetation to enhance this spatial organization, his design of circulation patterns to support visitors' movements through this space, the views and vistas to sculpture and other garden spaces created using these tools, and the use of water to enhance the cooling qualities of the vegetation. The spatial organization, topography, vegetation, circulation, views and vistas, constructed water features, and buildings and structures of the garden are evaluated in detail below by comparing the condition of these components in 1981 with their condition today. Each section closes with an evaluation of the effect that the current conditions of the landscape have on the garden's integrity to 1981.

Certain features of Bunshaft's original design created the framework within which Collins located and expressed his solutions to the problems the Smithsonian wished to solve in the sculpture garden. The Bunshaft-designed features that were part of the redesigned garden when it opened in 1981 are therefore also important to an evaluation of the garden's integrity. Character-defining features from the

¹⁸² National Register Bulletin 15, "How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation," U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, National Register of Historic Places, 1997, 44-45.

¹⁸³ National Register Bulletin 15, 44.

1974 garden incorporated into the 1981 design include its perimeter, retaining, and freestanding walls and the spaces they create; lower-level reflecting pool; south stairs; location and dimensions of the tunnel entrance at the garden; location of the north stairs along the Eighth Street axis; terraced topography set below ground level; function as an outdoor space for the display of sculpture; and spatial relationship to the Hirshhorn museum and plaza and the National Mall.¹⁸⁴ These remaining features of the Bunshaft design are also evaluated in the integrity assessment below.

Comparative Analysis

Spatial Organization

Historic: The Hirshhorn Sculpture Garden was constructed on the north side of Jefferson Drive opposite the museum and within the National Mall's tree panel there. To support a visual connection along the Eighth Street axis between the museum and the National Archives building, the sunken rectangular garden was designed in a near-symmetrical arrangement around a north-south axis through the center of the drum-shaped Hirshhorn Museum building. The garden's entrances and its two aprons were located on the same level as the National Mall, while its intermediate level was depressed approximately 7 feet and its lowest level approximately 14 feet. (Figure 35) To preserve a mature oak that stood on the southwest corner of the garden, a large square area was left level with the surrounding Mall elevation.

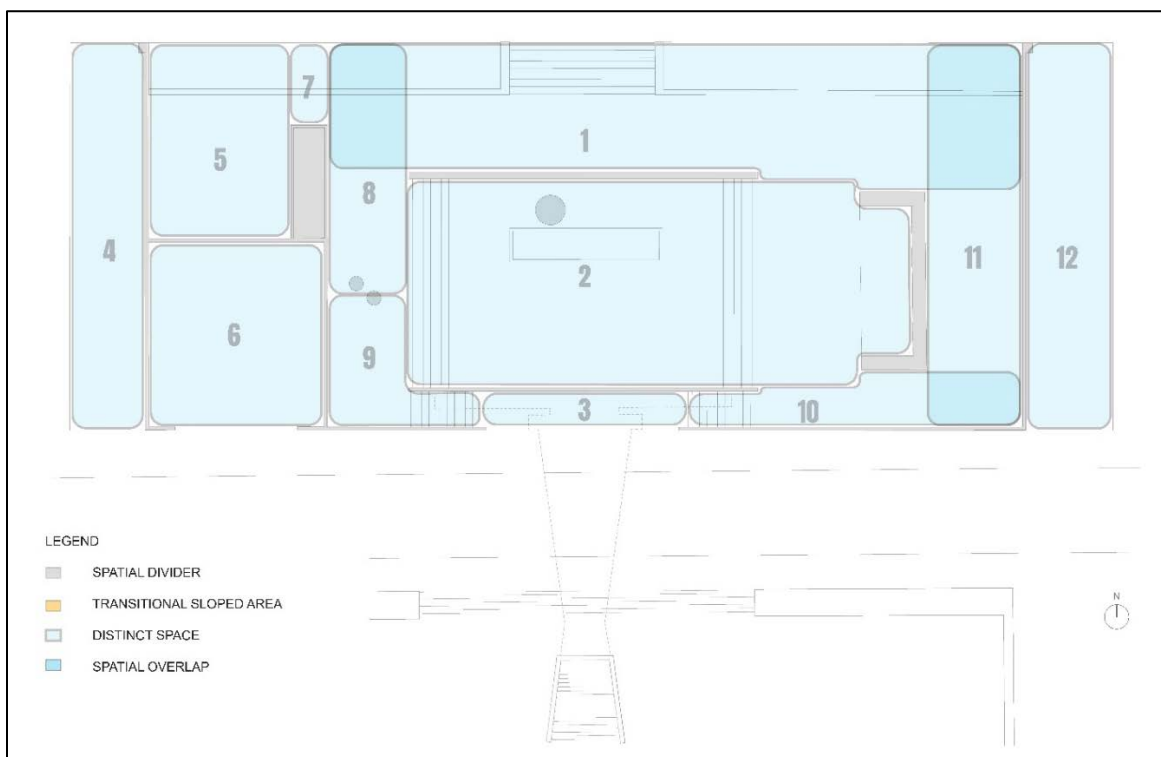


Figure 35 – Spatial organization of Bunshaft's sculpture garden design, 1974, with a total of 12 distinct spaces. (Base by Quinn Evans Architects, annotated by Laura Knott)

¹⁸⁴ Another important feature of the Bunshaft design was the tunnel that led from the museum plaza to the sculpture garden below Jefferson Drive. The tunnel was closed in 1980, however, and did not figure in the redesign of the garden in 1981.

In the years after completion of the Bunshaft-designed garden, museum staff realized that it did not provide enough places to put sculpture.¹⁸⁵ In response, Lester Collins increased the spatial complexity of the garden, keeping Bunshaft's retaining and free-standing walls and terraces, but expanding the number of discernible garden "rooms" by adding ramps, raised planters, and vertical plantings. (Figure 36) These included "green walls" created by dense groupings of Japanese black pine (*Pinus nigra*) and pyramidal beech (*Fagus. darwykii*) in planters between the intermediate and lower levels of the garden. Together, the existing walls and terraces, along with Collins's ramps, planters, stairs, and vertical plantings, orchestrated within the garden a series of open-air rooms, throughout which works of sculpture were strategically placed by Hirshhorn staff. Three of these gardens rooms overlapped (#9, #10, and #16), causing the perception of these spaces to change depending on the orientation of the viewer.

Collins's alterations did not affect the large oak saved in Bunshaft's design, nor the willow by the reflecting pool. He added large shade trees, specifically the copper beech (*Fagus sylvatica* 'Atropunicea') and the sugar maple (*Acer saccharum*), to provide ceiling-like enclosures to two spaces (#10 and #17). In his early plans, he also recommended a row of eight ginkgoes along Jefferson Drive to provide shade and to act as a translucent screen, providing definition of space with a tracery of vegetation.¹⁸⁶ Because

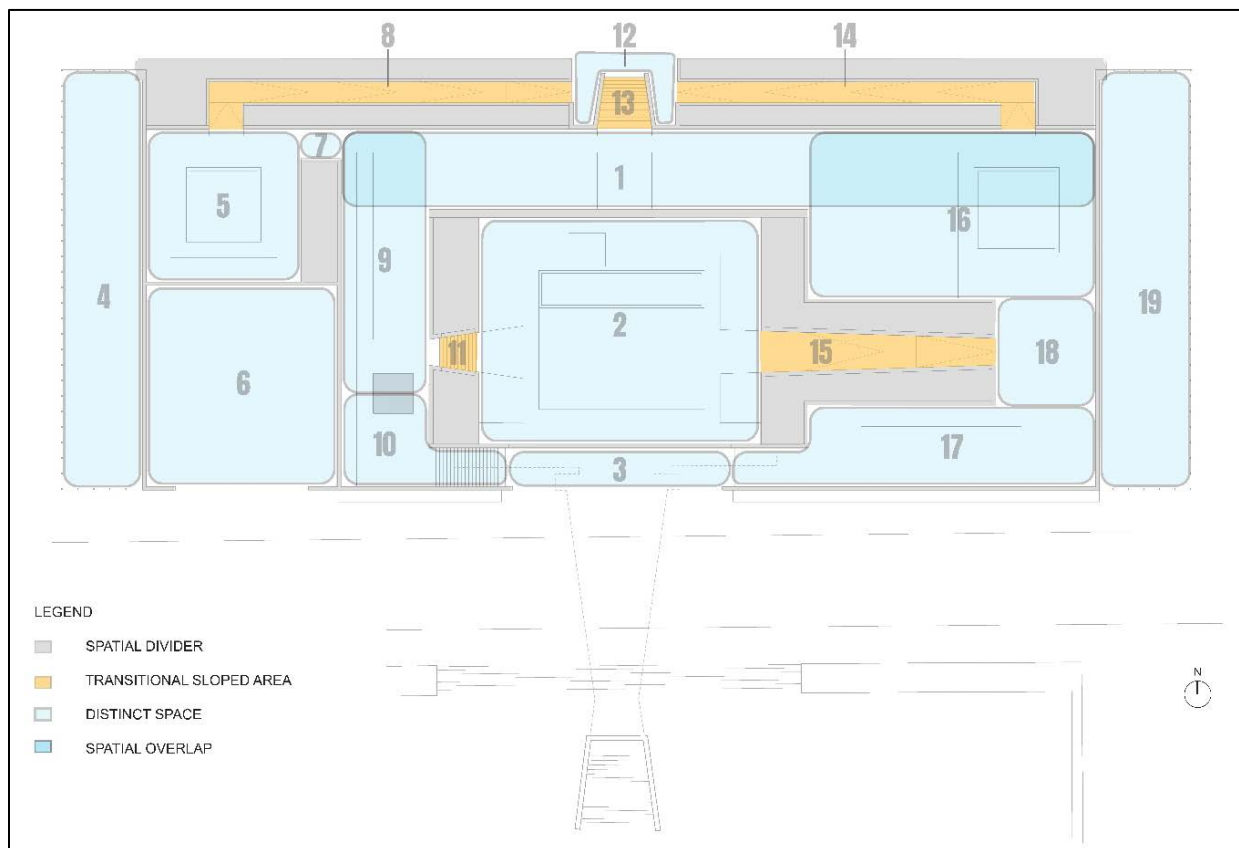


Figure 36. Spatial organization of Collins' sculpture garden design, 1981, with a total of 19 distinct spaces. Grey indicates both concrete and vegetative walls. (Base by Quinn Evans Architects, annotated by Laura Knott)

¹⁸⁵ January 19, 1978 CFA Meeting Transcript, 9.

¹⁸⁶ January 19, 1978 CFA Meeting Transcript, 10-11.

of concerns about maintaining the Eighth Street axis, however, Collins reduced the number of ginkgoes to four, two each on the east and west ends of the garden. Initially, he proposed replacing the central ginkgoes with Russian olive trees, a smaller species (likely *Elaeagnus angustifolia*, now a known invasive plant). When the garden opened, however, Collins had determined to plant six hawthorns (*Crataegus phaenopyrum*) in place of the Russian olives.¹⁸⁷ With their small leaves and horizontal branching, hawthorns also provided a translucent screen of foliage but maintained the axis as viewed from the museum plaza.

Around the fall of 1980, Collins and staff of the Hirshhorn and the Smithsonian revised the paving of the sculpture garden, adding additional areas of grass to both the intermediate level terraces and the lower level. The arrangement of the grass panels and paving also served to organize the garden, further subdividing the spaces within the rooms established by the gardens walls and vertical vegetation.

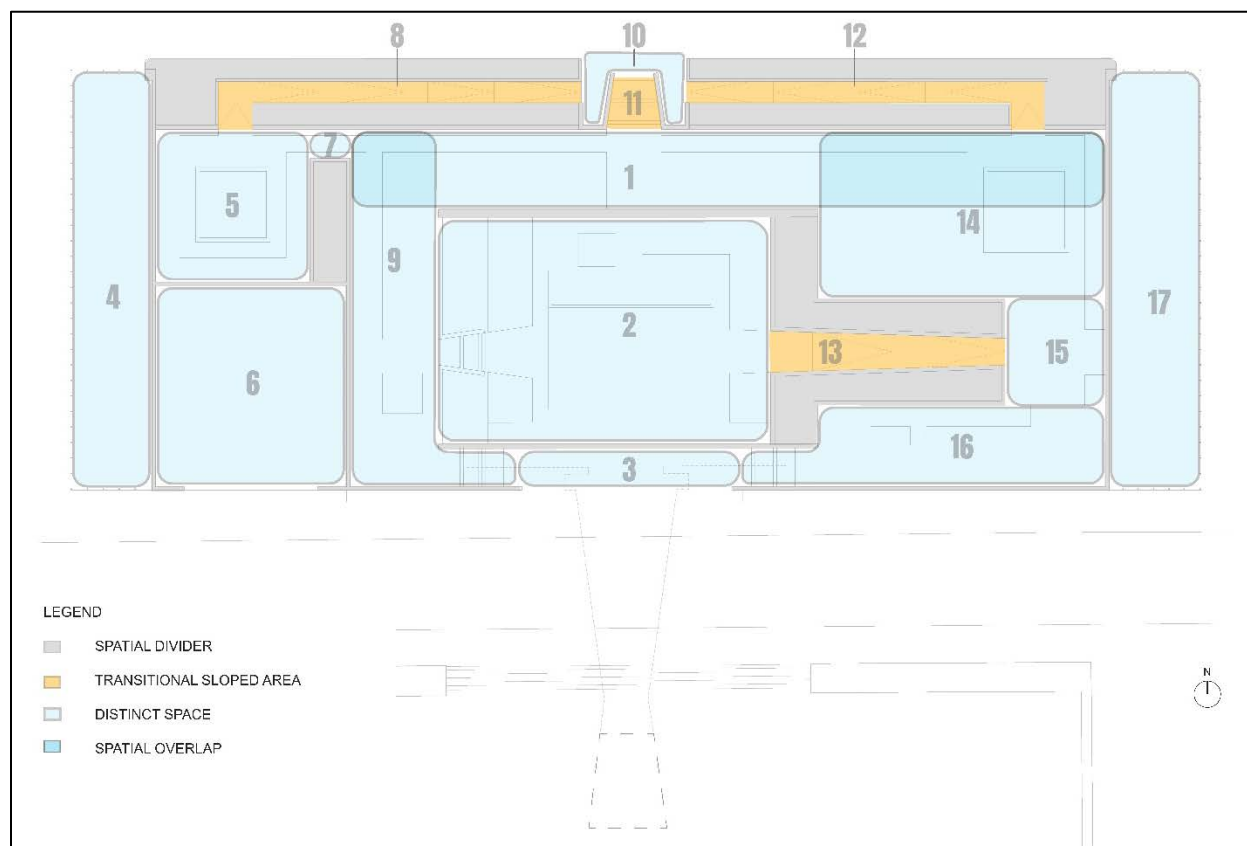


Figure 37 – Spatial organization of sculpture garden 2019, with a total of 17 distinct spaces. (Base by Quinn Evans Architects, annotated by Laura Knott).

¹⁸⁷ Conrad to Reiss, March 3, 1978; Conrad to Reiss, April 7, 1978, Smithsonian Archives. The compromise solution of smaller trees between the pairs of ginkgoes was arrived at in discussions with NCPC in the spring of 1978. Conrad's April 7 letter informed Reiss of NCPC's approval of the design for the sculpture garden with this arrangement. The executive director's report noted, however, the "shrubby" nature of the olive trees which would require pruning to allow pedestrians to walk beneath them. It may be, then, that Collins and the Hirshhorn replaced the olives with hawthorns to avoid that problem. In research conducted for this study, the hawthorns first appear in Collins's circa fall 1980 planting plan that also addresses the installation of additional grassy areas in the garden.

Existing: The built features that help organize the space within the sculpture garden – Bunshaft’s boundary and retaining walls and stairs and Collins’s accessible ramps, planters, raised pedestals, and paving pattern – have remained unchanged since 1981. The location and extent of planted areas in the garden, which also help organize the space, remain close to their 1981 conditions as well. The loss of several Japanese black pines and all of the pyramidal beech in the garden, however, has simplified the interior space, particularly in the area west of the reflecting pool, reducing the number of perceptible garden rooms to 17 from 19. (Figure 37) The southwest corner of the terrace level lost its ceiling of vegetation with the removal of the copper beech that had been planted there in 1981. The large oak saved by Bunshaft in the southwest corner of the garden declined and was removed in 1988.¹⁸⁸ There are now no trees along the Jefferson Drive side of the garden, although they appear in a 1993 photographs and in the 1983 accessions planting plan with later revisions.

Analysis: Today, the garden has retained many space-defining elements, including the concrete retaining and freestanding walls and terraces from the Bunshaft design, along with new walls, ramps, stairs, paving, and location of vegetation from the Collins design. The presence of these features support the integrity in all of its aspects. However, the loss of the Japanese black pines, pyramidal beech, copper beech, and large oak diminishes integrity of *design, materials, and feeling*, as well as the garden’s *association* with Collins.

Topography

Historic: The garden as designed by Bunshaft consisted of three levels connected by stairs. The north and south entrances to the garden were located on the National Mall or street level, as were the garden’s two aprons to the east and west, and the existing oak. Stairs led down approximately 7 feet to the garden’s intermediate level, then another 7 feet to its lowest level, at around 14 feet below the National Mall.¹⁸⁹ By adding the north ramps and overlook, the ramp and narrow stairway from the intermediate to lower levels, and the two raised pedestals, Collins increased the topographic variety of the space. (Figures 38 and 39)

Existing: Today, the initial development of three levels in the garden by Bunshaft and the variations introduced into the original topography by Collins remain unchanged from 1981.

Analysis: The topographic variety of the sculpture garden has not changed since 1981, maintaining these aspects of the garden’s integrity of *design, feeling, and association*.

¹⁸⁸ Buckler to Demetron, August 29, 1988, Smithsonian Archives, accession 04-155, box 3.

¹⁸⁹ The reason for the discrepancies between the topography drawings above and those given in descriptions of Bunshaft’s design are not clear. They may, however, relate to alterations to the garden after its original design.



Figure 38 – Topography of Bunshaft's sculpture garden design, 1974, with a total of 5 different levels, including stairs. (Base by Quinn Evans Architects, annotated by Laura Knott)



Figure 39 – Topography of Collins' sculpture garden design, 1981, with a total of 7 different levels, including stairs and ramps. This pattern has not changed to the present day. (Base by Quinn Evans Architects, annotated by Laura Knott)

Historic: Bunshaft designed the sculpture garden with seven species of vegetation, with the goal of providing a simple and almost monochromatic container for the display of sculpture. (Figure 40) The seven species included the American elms (*Ulmus americana*) planted in the Mall-level aprons of the garden, although they were indicated in the plans as “N.I.C.” or “not in contract,” and the small multi-trunk trees that appear not in plans but in photographs of the completed garden. As installed, the garden also had a weeping willow planted instead of the birchbark cherry (*Prunus serrula*) specified in the plans.

[illegible]

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initially proposed 23-24 kinds of trees, shrubs, and vines, thereby increasing the number of plant species in the garden over three-fold. (Figure 41) He proposed trees that were very sculptural in form, including 2 Babylon weeping willows in addition to the one already existing, as well as 2 copper beech (one was eventually replaced with a sugar maple), 3 weeping beech (*Fagus sylvatica* 'Pendula'), 34 pyramidal beech, 8 ginkgoes (later reduced to 4), 15 Japanese black pines, and 1 dawn redwood (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*); another dawn redwood was eventually added to create the final design.¹⁹⁰ He discussed some of these plants in the January 1978 CFA presentation, saying that the two very large copper beech, which were to be transplanted from elsewhere, would be essential to create instant shade and spatial definition. (See Spatial Organization, above.) In addition, he described the Japanese black pines as key to his design to define space and provide interesting textures with their branching habit. Further, he mentioned placing climbing hydrangea on the wall between the larger garden and the cul-de-sac (northwest corner room), saying that vines could be removed for sculpture display if needed. In his early designs, he also suggested placing a row of ginkgo trees along Jefferson Drive to provide shade and a translucent screen. As mentioned above, Collins responded to the concerns of the review agencies by reducing the number of ginkgoes in favor of smaller trees in the spring of 1978 in order to protect views of the museum along the Eighth Street axis. According to a planting plan by Collins probably devised in the fall of 1980, 6 hawthorns had been chosen to replace the 4 central ginkgoes. (Figure 24) Another addition to the plant palette by Collins at that time were white 'Gumpo' azaleas beneath the Japanese pines and pyramidal beeches in the planters.

Not mentioned in other documentation of the design and development process, but included in the Smithsonian's 1983 accession inventory were Mount Fuji cherries, sugar maple, Boston ivy, Baltic ivy, purple clematis, and silver lacevine. No new areas of planting were inserted into Collins's plan for the garden to accommodate these species, and it is not known if these substitutions and additions were recommended by Collins, if the choices were made by Smithsonian horticulture staff, or if there was an agreement among the parties to vary the plantings in this manner.¹⁹¹

Existing: Today, a wide variety of trees, shrubs, vines, grasses, perennials, and groundcover are cultivated within the Hirshhorn Museum Sculpture Garden.¹⁹² On the level of the National Mall in the garden's east and west aprons stand several American elms arranged in rows, which were part of Gordon Bunshaft's planting plan. They fit into the larger scheme of American elms that flank almost the entire length of the Mall. On the intermediate level of the garden, the sole weeping European beech (*Fagus sylvatica* 'Pendula') and sole sugar maple (*Acer saccharum*) stand in their historic locations. (Figure 42) Five Japanese black pines stand in their historic locations in the raised planters that flank the ramp from the intermediate to the lower level, while the Japanese black pines flanking the stairs on the west are missing entirely. The pyramidal beeches Collins had interspersed with the pines are also absent. Several Hinoki false cypress (*Chamaecyparis obtusa* 'Gracilis Compacta') grow in the borders in the northwest corner room. A single white-flowering Japanese dogwood called the "Yoko Ono Wish

¹⁹⁰ 1977 June 27 Original Collins Drawing and 1983_0714_Plant Materials Accession 07141983-3.

¹⁹¹ Beginning with the January 1978 plan reviewed by CFA, drawings of the garden depict five small trees or shrubs, comparable in diameter to Collins's pyramidal beeches, in the planted areas on either side of the north stairs. The drawings do not identify the type of vegetation represented.

¹⁹² The following lists of species is from "Existing Landscape, Landscape Existing Ground Plane," Concept Review, May 3, 2019, in National Capital Planning Commission, Executive Director's Recommendation, Commission Meeting June 6, 2019.

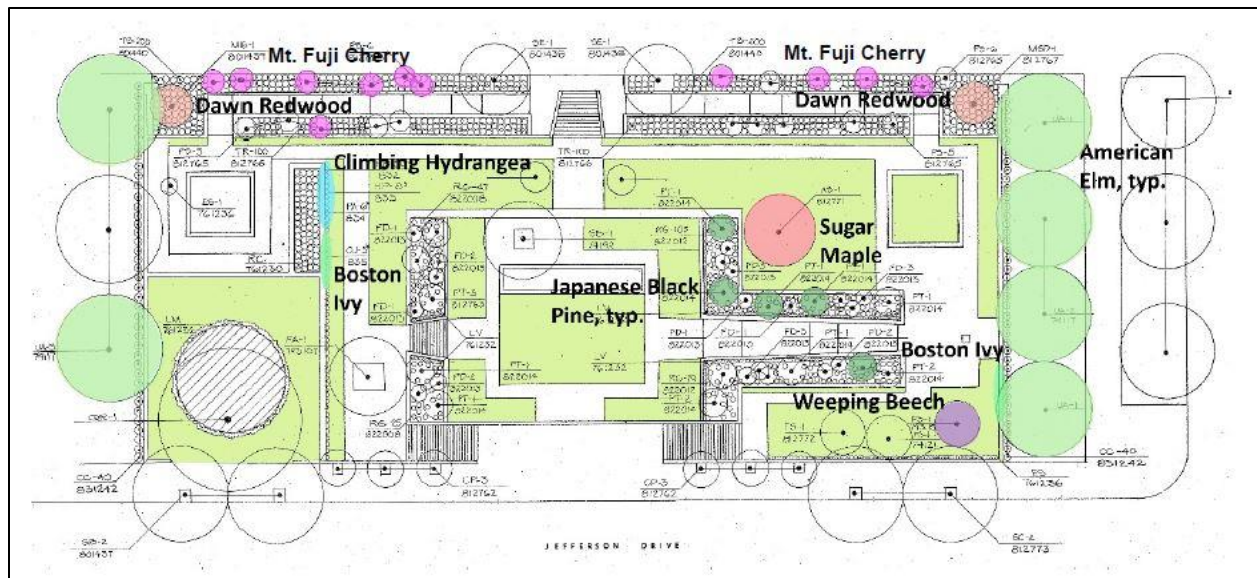


Figure 42 – Collins's 1981 planting plan, represented by the Smithsonian's plant materials accession record completed in 1983 and annotated to show plants remaining from Collins' design. (Base drawn by Quinn Evans Architects, annotated by Laura Knott)

Tree" (*Cornus kousa*) stands close to the garden's southeast stairway and represents a larger, international art installation.¹⁹³ On the lowest level of the garden, a pond cypress (*Taxodium ascendens*) stands in the planter adjacent to the reflecting pool. Eight Northern white cedars (*Thuja occidentalis*) grow in a line on the south side of the adjacent wall. All the other trees grow in planters next to the north ramps. These include flowering cherries, Higan (*Prunus subhirtella*) and Yoshino (*P. x yedoensis*), Japanese pagoda tree (*Sophora japonica*), columnar sugar maple (*A. saccharum* 'Monumentale'), witch hazel (*Hammelis x intermedia*), white-flowering crape myrtle (*Lagerstroemia indica*, likely 'Natchez'), bald cypress (*Taxodium distichum*), dawn redwood (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*), and Austrian pine (*Pinus nigra*).

Shrubs include, on the National Mall level of the garden, Japanese quince (*Chaenomeles japonica*) that is maintained as clipped hedge along the east and west garden walls. A dense mix of evergreen and deciduous species flanks the north ramps. Evergreens include spreading English yew (*Taxus baccata* 'Repandens'), prostrate Japanese plum yew (*Cephalotaxus* 'Prostrata'), cow's tail pine (*Cephalotaxus* 'Duke Gardens'), inkberry holly (*Ilex glabra* 'Shamrock'), Adam's needle (*Yucca filamentosa* 'Bright Edge'), dwarf mountain pine (*Pinus mugo*), and 'Gumpo' azalea (*Rhododendron* 'Gumpo White'). Deciduous shrubs include Chinese abelia (*Abelia chinensis*), red osier dogwood (*Cornus sericea* 'Kelsyi'), Arnold's Promise witch hazel (*Hamamelis x intermedia* 'Arnold's Promise'), and Virginia sweetspire (*Itea virginica* 'Sprich' Little Henry). Japanese aralia (*Fatsia japonica*) and fothergilla (*Fothergilla x intermedia* 'Blue Shadow') grow in the planters flanking the ramp between the intermediate and lower levels.

Perennials, grasses, and groundcovers are located throughout the garden. They include giant hyssop (*Agastache* 'Black Adder'), Japanese anemone (*Anemone x hybrida* 'Whirlwind'), coral bells (*Heuchura* 'Blackout'), dwarf hosta (*Hosta* 'Blue Mouse Ears'), dwarf mondo grass (*Ophiopogon japonicus* 'Nana'), feather reed grass (*Calamagrostis x acutiflora* 'Karl Foerster'), hardy geranium (*Geranium sanguineum* 'Album'), Siberian iris (*Iris sibirica* 'Season's Brother' and 'Butter and Sugar'), stonecrop (*Sedum lineare*

¹⁹³ "Imagine Peace Tower," <http://imaginepeacetower.com/yoko-onos-wish-trees/>, accessed November 23, 2019.

'Golden Teardrop'), Japanese forest grass (*Hakonechloa macra*), lavender (*Lavendula x intermedia* 'Phenomenal'), autumn moor grass (*Seslaria autumnalis*), and liriop (Liriope muscari).¹⁹⁴ Vines climb the garden walls in several places; these include Japanese climbing hydrangea (*Hydrangea anomala subsp. petiolaris*) and Boston ivy (*Parthenocissus tricuspidata*). Two mixed annual and perennial borders are maintained between the south wall of the garden and the sidewalk along Jefferson Drive. The ground plane of the garden aprons is kept in mulch. The southwest corner where the oak once stood on the Mall level is kept in mown turf, as is most of the ground plane of the intermediate and lower levels.

Analysis: Today, the number of species planted in the sculpture garden totals more than forty, as opposed to the roughly two dozen that were planted in 1981. This is partly due to the addition of grasses and other plantings in some planters and formerly sodded areas and a general expansion of varieties planted. The extent of areas devoted to vegetation, however, remain generally the same as they were in 1981. Elm trees planted as part of the Bunshaft design flank the garden in the aprons outside the east and west walls, although two are missing. All four ginkgoes and the six hawthorns along Jefferson Drive are also missing. The planted areas along the north ramps, the east ramp, and the west stairs remain, as do the large majority of the areas of sod on the intermediate and lower levels. Loss of vegetation includes the oak tree that existed when the garden was constructed and the weeping willow Bunshaft planted near the pool (replaced now by a pond cypress). Due to loss of original plant materials since 1981 and changes made to the planting palette by SI Gardens in the intervening years, seven of Collins's roughly two dozen proposed plant species remain (Figure 42). These species are represented by 9 trees: 2 dawn redwoods, 1 sugar maple, 5 Japanese black pines, and 1 weeping beech; and 3 vines: 1 climbing hydrangea and 2 Boston ivies, as well as the sodded areas. In addition, white 'Gumpo' azaleas are also present in the garden, but not in their original locations as designed by Collins. The continuity of the location and extent of the planted areas in the garden and the remaining examples of the varieties Collins proposed argue for integrity of *materials* (plants) and *workmanship* (planting design), as well as the overall *design* of the garden. (Figure 43) The loss of many of his proposed species, however, especially those that functioned as the vertical elements in the landscape architect's outdoor rooms, diminishes integrity in the same categories. These factors together have also lessened the garden's integrity in the categories of *feeling* and its *association* with Collins.



Figure 43 - Photographs comparing vegetation in the garden in 1986 (left) with conditions in 2019 (right). (Smithsonian Institution, left, and Robinson & Associates, right)

¹⁹⁴ "Existing Landscape, Landscape Existing Ground Plane," Concept Review, May 3, 2019, in National Capital Planning Commission, Executive Director's Recommendation, Commission Meeting June 6, 2019.

Circulation

Historic: Entrance into the garden designed by Bunshaft occurred on the National Mall level in three places. On the south side, across Jefferson Drive from the museum, a broad overlook facing north gave access to a symmetrical pair of granite stairs set parallel and adjacent to the south wall and leading down to the intermediate level. Users of the overlook and stairs were protected on the north side by a massive combined handrail/guardrail that matched the exposed aggregate of the garden's perimeter retaining walls and the museum facade. A second south entrance was located at the lower level, access being gained through a tunnel opening from the museum plaza. On the north side, opposite and symmetrical with the overlook, he placed a single set of broad stairs from the Mall to the intermediate garden level. Broad stairs on the east and west led from the intermediate to the lower garden level. Throughout, Bunshaft provided a homogenous gravel paving surface, encouraging free-flowing circulation throughout with few controlled decision points. (Figure 44)

In response to the problems caused by the use of gravel, including lack of wheelchair accessibility and damage to sculptural works, Collins's initial idea in the summer of 1977 was to replace it with flagstone and brick paving.¹⁹⁵ These materials were included in succeeding plans of the garden through the second phase of construction in 1980, although Collins showed a willingness to support CFA's idea of browns and tans for the paving color instead of the greys of the flagstone and brick proposed.¹⁹⁶ By 1980, the

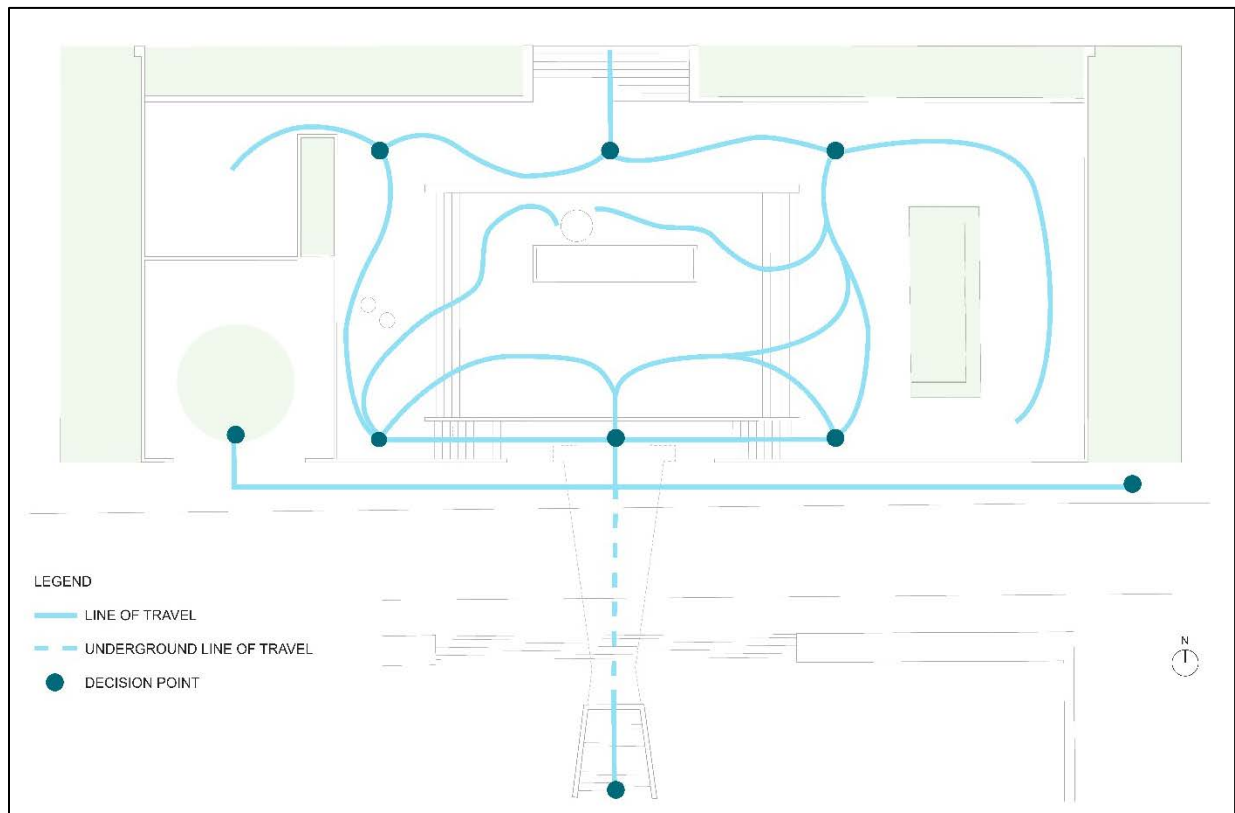


Figure 44 – Circulation pattern of Bunshaft's design was freeflowing and un-choreographed. (Base by Quinn Evans Architects, annotated by Laura Knott)

¹⁹⁵ June 1977 Lester Collins plan.

¹⁹⁶ January 19, 1978 CFA Meeting Transcript, 14-15.

decision still had not been made. The Smithsonian's OFPES the proposed square brick pavers comparable in color to the grey-brown brick of the lower level as the most reasonable substitute for the flagstone at the intermediate level.¹⁹⁷ In the end, the intermediate level walkways were surfaced with square brown brick pavers and the lower level paved in the grey-brown brick in a basket weave pattern Collins had used from his first design. By the time this area was constructed in 1981, Collins and the Smithsonian had agreed to replace much of the paving with sod.¹⁹⁸ The final layout of the walkways created a tightly choreographed journey through the garden with many decision points. (Figure 45)

To address wheelchair accessibility issues, Collins designed two concrete ramps set parallel to the north retaining wall that led from the Mall level to the intermediate level. Collins had initially proposed removing the north stair from Bunshaft's design. The arrangement mirrored the stairs on the south and provided an arrival experience for visitors in wheelchairs comparable to that of other visitors. Ultimately, in conversation with review agencies and Hirshhorn staff, Collins reduced the breadth of the north stairs, retaining small overlooks to either side. The ramps were offset from the north wall and from the Mall's broad, gravel walkways by narrow, sloped planting beds filled with dense arrangements of shrubs and trees. Collins also designed another ramp leading from the intermediate level to the eastern edge of the lower level and a narrow stair leading to the opposite side. These various ramps and

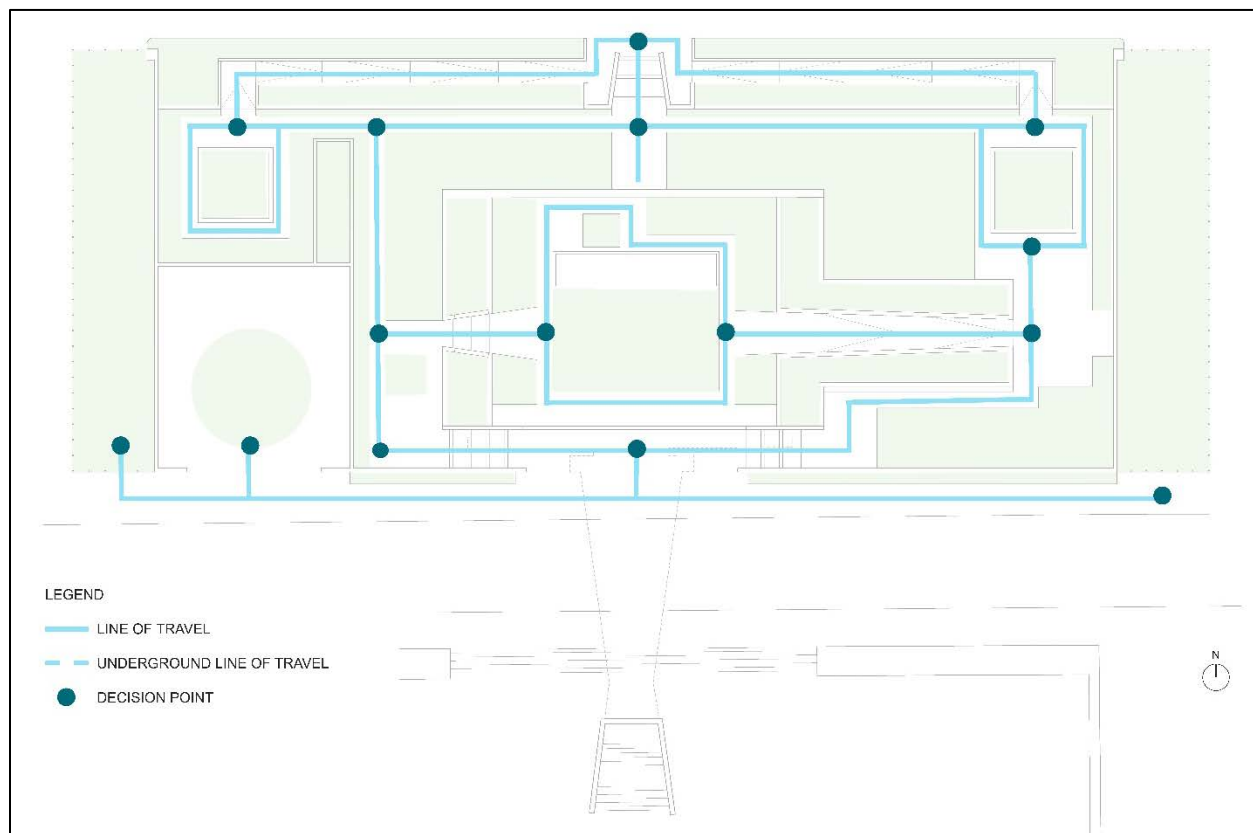


Figure 45 – Circulation pattern of Collins's design was more choreographed and controlled. (Base by Quinn Evans Architects, annotated by Laura Knott)

¹⁹⁷ Reiss to Lerner, August 6, 1980 and Lerner to Weil, Kirkpatrick, Shannon, March 30, 1981. See also "1980 late Nov after HMSG Collins Planting Plan.jpg."

¹⁹⁸ Lester Collins, [Hirshhorn Sculpture Garden Planting Plan], ca. fall 1980, Smithsonian Institution Archives.

stairs connected to walkways that led to and through a number of garden rooms containing a wide variety of sculptural pieces.

During the design process there was much discussion about whether or not the ramps needed handrails or guardrails to satisfy current regulations. It was thought at first that regulations did not require railings because the grade of the slope was low. Smithsonian officials also considered that the plantings on either side of the ramps would serve as barriers.¹⁹⁹ It became clear by the second construction phase in 1980 that railings for both the ramps and the stairs would be necessary, although only the sleeves for them were installed at that time. The railings were installed during the third phase of construction, in 1981.²⁰⁰ Photographs from that year show surface-mounted square metal handrails, possibly aluminum due to their light color. These may have been intended to be temporary because photographs from 1986 show that these had been replaced with the bronze handrails that exist today.

Existing: Today, circulation into and through the garden continues to occur along the overlook and south stairs designed by Bunshaft and the series of walkways, stairways, and ramps designed by Collins, all of which remain unchanged and in good condition (Figure 46). The overlook paving matches the exposed aggregate of the public sidewalks lining Jefferson Drive (an alteration that took place after 1993, according to photographs), and the stairway steps are of the original Swenson pink granite.

One element of the circulation that is no longer used for its original purpose is Bunshaft's tunnel from the museum plaza to the lower level of the garden. The tunnel was closed just before renovation of the sculpture garden took place. Also important to the circulation pattern are the pool Bunshaft located on the lower level, the raised pedestals Collins located in the northeast and northwest corners of the



Figure 46 – View of existing brown, square brick paving. (Robinson & Associates, 2019)

¹⁹⁹ January 19, 1978 CFA Meeting Transcript, 7-9.

²⁰⁰ Reiss to Lerner, August 6, 1980; Lerner to Weil, Kirkpatrick, Shannon, March 30, 1981.

garden, and Collins's placement of the jet fountain at the top of the east ramp, all of which were intended to act as focal points to draw visitors through the space. Although the jet fountain no longer functions, Hirshhorn staff have set a pedestal for sculpture in that location, recognizing its importance as a focal point that encourages movement, and have also placed sculptures at prominent locations along the walks Collins created to attract visitors to the space. Final aspects of the sculpture garden's circulation are the three levels Bunshaft included in his original design and the loose screens of vegetation that Collins planned as the walls of his outdoor rooms. Both devices allow visitors to see beyond the immediate space in which they stand and lead them on to other sculptures within the garden. These are aspects of Chinese "cup" gardens that Collins incorporated into his design.

Analysis: The circulation pattern and its materials remain in place today in good condition, which contributes to the garden's integrity of *design* in the layout of the pathways, the variety of original *materials*, the *workmanship* of its square and basket weave paving patterns, and the *feeling* of and *association* with the 1981 garden's function as an outdoor space for the display of sculpture. The absence of many of the trees Collins planned to enclose the garden's outdoor rooms diminishes the integrity of the "hide-and-reveal" aspect of his design of the garden's circulation, especially on the west side of the garden.

Views and Vistas

Historic: Bunshaft designed the sculpture garden as a sunken counterpart to the bulk of the museum building. While from the plaza of the museum across the street views into the garden would have been limited, the interior of the garden could be clearly viewed from the museum building's balcony. (Figure 47) Bunshaft also designed the garden to be as flexible as possible for the display of sculpture. (Figure 48) The street-level overlook from the landing at the center of the south stairs provided a view of nearly the entire space as visitors prepared to enter the garden. Within the garden itself there were few planned vistas, and multiple sculptures could be seen in any direction. Views between the different levels of the garden were also available.

The simplicity of Bunshaft's design led to complaints by the museum that there were too many overlapping views and not enough distinct places to display sculpture. When he began to work on the new design, Collins aimed to develop a more complex system of choreographed spaces that established a few set vistas and opportunities for Hirshhorn staff to create vistas toward particular works, while also providing for different viewing options.²⁰¹ (Figure 49) In addition, the use of loose screens of trees to create garden rooms allowed for glimpses from one space to another. (Figure 50) The tree-walled spaces also created viewing experiences similar to the "cup" gardens developed by Collins and Walter Beck at Innisfree, albeit within a Modernist urban garden instead of a large rural estate.

As discussed previously, Collins initially proposed a row of 8 ginkgo trees on the north side of Jefferson Drive, which would provide shade and function as a translucent screen between the street and the garden. These trees became a point of contention during the design process because trees in this location had been specifically excluded from the 1971 site and building plans for the Hirshhorn Museum and the 1976 Bicentennial Development Concepts for the National Mall in order to better visually connect the museum and the garden and to strengthen the National Mall's Eighth Street cross-axis

²⁰¹ January 19, 1978 CFA Meeting Transcript, 12.



Figure 47 – View of Bunshaft's sculpture garden as seen from the balcony of the Hirshhorn Museum in 1974. (Smithsonian Institution Archives)

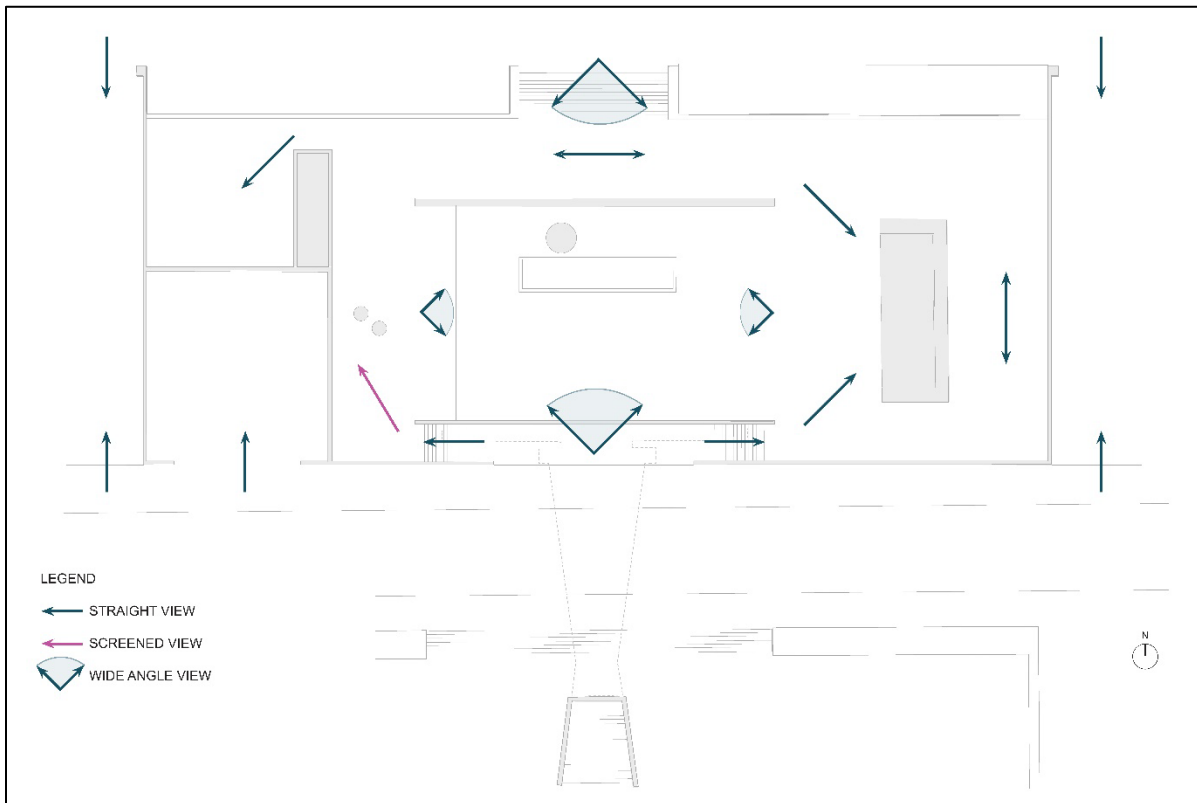


Figure 48 – Bunshaft-designed views and vistas. (Base by Quinn Evans Architects, annotated by Laura Knott)

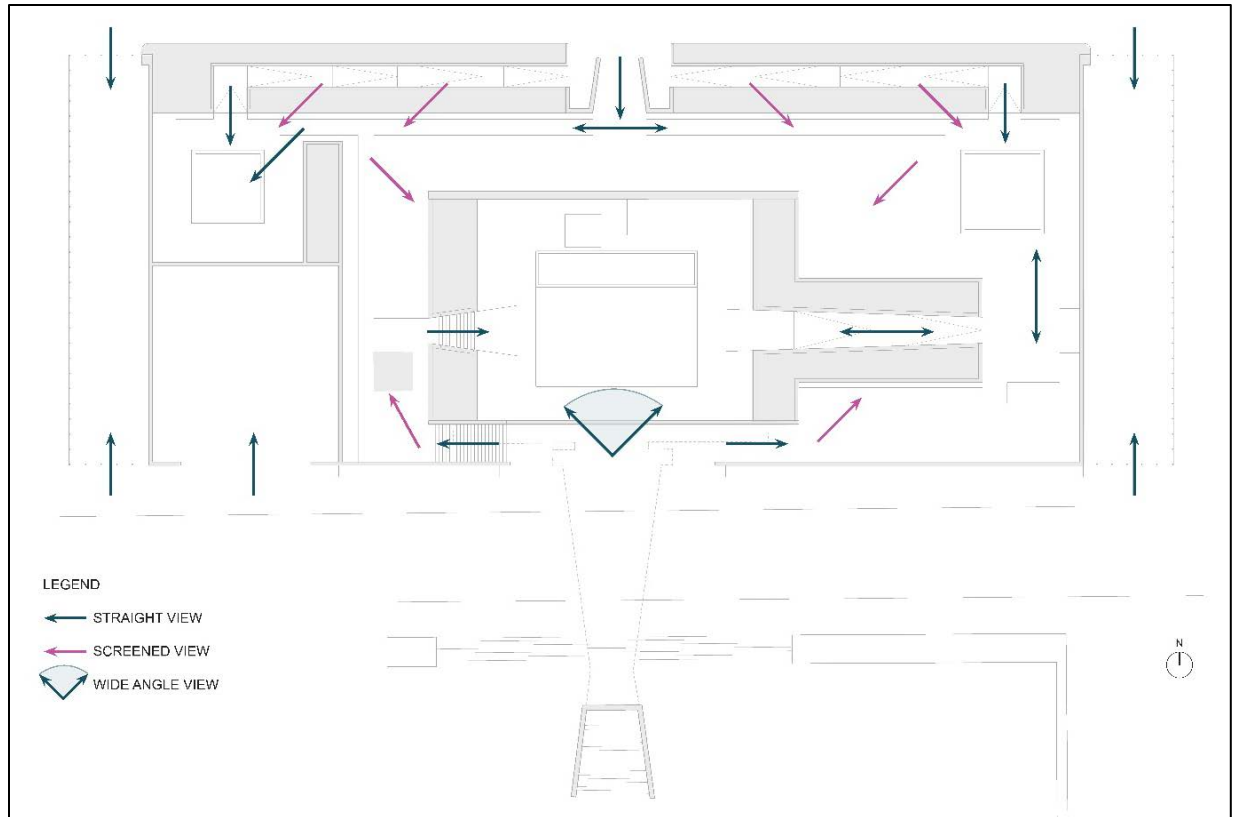


Figure 49 – Collins-designed views and vistas. (Base by Quinn Evans Architects, annotated by Laura Knott)



Figure 50 – View from 1986 looking eastward from the southwest corner of the intermediate level. (Smithsonian Institution Archives)

between the Hirshhorn and the National Archives building.²⁰² As a result of discussions with review agencies, Collins revised his design, placing pairs of ginkgo trees as framing elements for axial views of the museum from the National Mall with six shorter hawthorn trees between them. The compromise retained, and even strengthened, the axial views while adding views through the tracery of the ginkgo and hawthorn branches, another technique Collins derived from Chinese gardens.

Existing: The south stair landing continues to offer the garden overview that Bunshaft planned, and the loss of vegetation has returned some of the overlapping views of the garden's initial design. The Hirshhorn Sculpture Garden also continues to provide planned views and vistas designed by Bunshaft and Collins. From the public sidewalk and street level on the museum side, one can glimpse the tops of trees that hint of the existence of the garden. (Figure 51) A sculpture currently exists on Bunshaft's overlook, a location Collins had proposed in his earliest scheme to draw visitors toward the garden. From this overlook across Jefferson Drive from the museum, one can understand its general layout.

On the north, Collins placed fixed locations for sculpture at the end of each of the accessible ramps (on raised pedestals) and at the foot of the central stair. Views of sculpture in these locations remain as he planned them. The small overlooks planned to flank the north stairs are today hindered by a guard booth on the west and the columnar sugar maple on the east. The full and ever-changing experience of the garden's sculptural contents, however, is not available until one descends into the garden. There, the choreographed circulation created by Collins's focal points, paving pattern, and sodded areas invites visitors to study sculptural works in a series of views as they move through the space.



Figure 51 – View looking northward from the Hirshhorn Museum. (Robinson & Associates, 2019)

²⁰² National Capital Planning Commission. "Executive Director's Recommendation," February 24, 1978, in 1978.03.03 conrad to reiss.pdf.

Analysis: Views towards and into the garden from street level on the south have not changed since 1981, contributing to its integrity of *design, feeling, and association* with Collins. Within the garden, the focal points Collins created also remain, providing direct views of specific works as well as longer views that guide visitors through the space, also contributing to the garden's integrity in these categories. The loss of vertical plant material that created green screens within the garden, as well as the four ginkgoes and six hawthorns along Jefferson Drive, has changed the character or eliminated some of the translucent views and some directed vistas, diminishing integrity in these categories.

Constructed Water Features

Historic: Bunshaft's design for the Hirshhorn Museum Sculpture Garden included a shallow, 12' x 60' reflecting pool, oriented east to west. The pool was designed to align with the garden's north stairs, which was the same width as the pool, across the north-south axis of the circular museum building. Collins's redesign did not affect Bunshaft's reflecting pool. He did add a second water feature, a single jet fountain placed on axis with the ramp from the intermediate to the lower level. (Figure 34) The jet fountain functioned as the focal point of the vista from the lower level and also as a cooling element in the garden.

In 1984, work was undertaken to repair the reflecting pool, which had begun to leak because of damage from the willow tree planted adjacent. It may have been after this repair that the bubbler fountain was added to the feature and two pots of water lilies installed. (Figure 52)

Existing: Today, the only water feature immediately evident within the garden is the reflecting pool. Although empty when visited for this report, the pool and its bubbler are operable for seasonal use. Water lilies are no longer cultivated there. The non-functional works of the jet fountain remain in place, but the fountain is mostly covered by a sculpture pedestal, leaving only the edges of its drainage grate in view. (Figure 53)



Figure 52 – Photograph of reflecting pool in 1984, viewed from the south. (Smithsonian Institution Archives)



Figure 53 – Fountain location (left) in 2019, viewed from the north. A pedestal and sculpture has been placed on the drainage grill of the fountain. (Robinson & Associates, 2019)

Analysis: The presence of both water features supports the garden's integrity of *design, materials, and workmanship*; however, the inoperability of the jet fountain and the limited use of the reflecting pool diminishes the integrity of *feeling, design, and association* with the designers.

Buildings and Structures

Historic: Bunshaft's sculpture garden was contained within a rectangle measuring 140 feet north to south and 360 feet east to west, corresponding to the width of the museum plaza and the depth of the National Mall's south tree panel. The architect designed the garden with three levels connected by stairs and sloping planters. The garden aprons, the cut-out retained for the oak, and the south entrance overlook were contiguous with the National Mall level and supported by exposed granite aggregate retaining walls. (Figure 54) The terrace on the intermediate level lay 7 feet below the Mall, and the reflecting pool on the lowest level, 14 feet below. An underground tunnel accessible via a staircase on the museum plaza allowed direct access beneath Jefferson Drive into the garden. A narrow storage room with a planted roof extended northward from the oak tree cut-out.

In his modifications of the sculpture garden, Lester Collins altered Bunshaft's north walls and stairs, but did not change the remaining retaining and boundary walls. (Figure 55) In his early drawings, Collins proposed removing the north stairs entirely, but in the final design, he pierced the north planter wall in two locations to accommodate the new ramps and narrowed the north stairs to provide a landing for the ramps at the Mall level and two narrow overlooks. Specifications developed for the ramp retaining

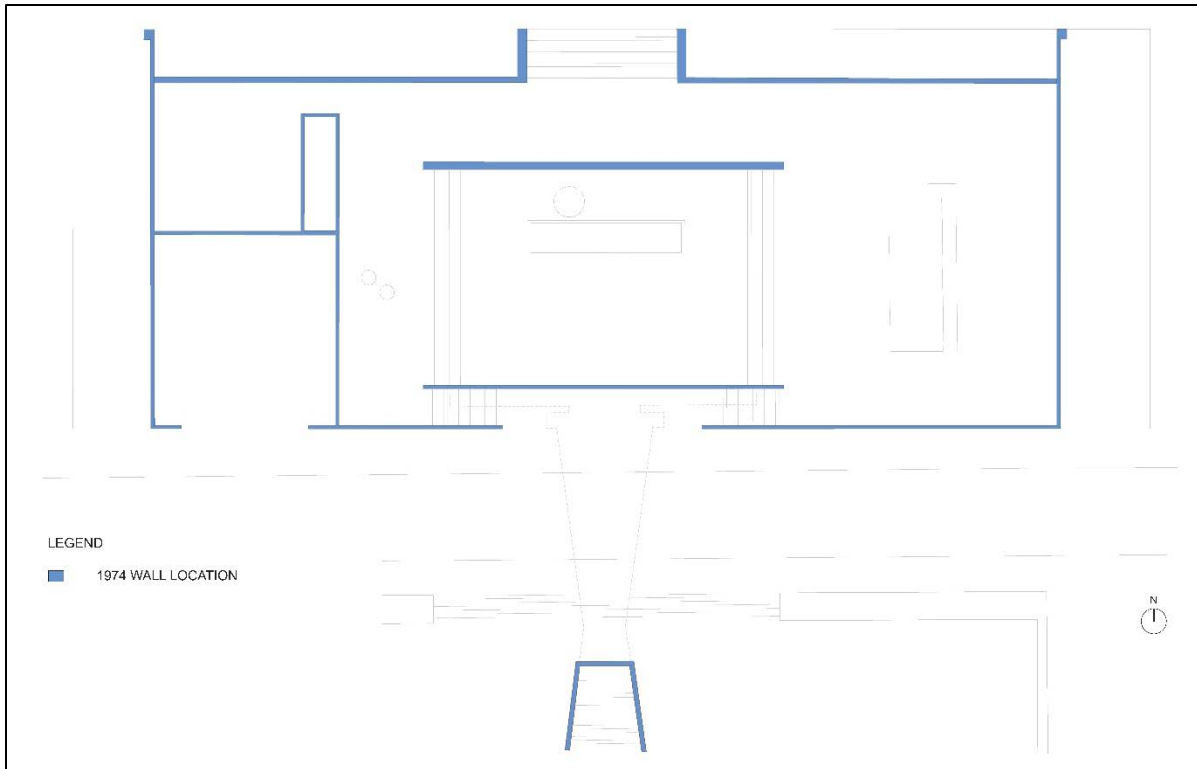


Figure 54 – Vignette showing the Bunshaft walls. (Base by Quinn Evans Architects, annotated by Laura Knott)

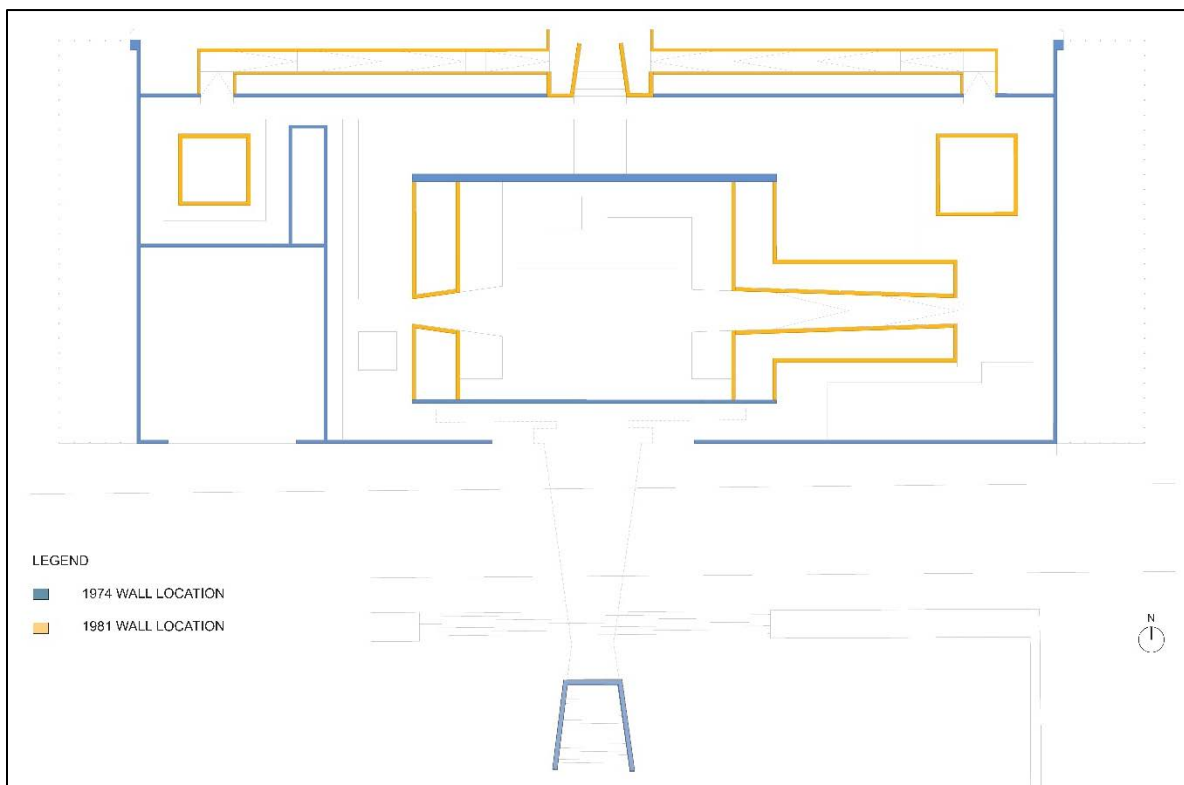


Figure 55 – Vignette showing the Bunshaft and Collins walls. (Base by Quinn Evans Architects, annotated by Laura Knott)

walls and stair cheekwalls attempted to match the Bunshaft wall concrete mix. The redesigned entrance reused the Swenson pink granite from the Bunshaft stairs that were removed to build the new stairs and exposed aggregate concrete for the ramps. Collins also created the two raised, sodded pedestals with granite masonry at the bottom of the ramps for display of sculpture.

Existing: All of the structures within the sculpture garden that stood when the garden reopened in 1981 – those originating in the Bunshaft design and Collins’s additions and alterations – remain today. These include the tunnel under Jefferson Drive, although that feature was closed to the public just before the 1981 renovation of the garden began. Some of the tunnel space is used for storage, but its northern end adjacent to the garden is currently in use as a multimedia arts education center. The north opening of the tunnel is enclosed with a glass and aluminum curtain wall that dates to the 2000s. The remaining built features retain their original functions, with the possible exception of the maintenance room contained within the east wall of the northwest corner room. Information on the use of this space in Bunshaft’s design was not found in research for this report.

The exposed granite aggregate retaining and freestanding walls are deteriorating due to water penetration and an alkali silica reaction, which presents with significant cracking and efflorescence-like leaching. This condition is inherent to the original concrete mixture and cannot be repaired, according to a recent investigation.²⁰³

Analysis: The exposed aggregate concrete boundary and retaining walls designed by Bunshaft, as well as his south overlook and lateral stairs, remain in place and continue to be used for their original purposes. All of the walls, stairs, and ramps from Collins’s design of 1981 also still exist in their original locations and are used for their original purposes, although later additions interfere with the use of the north overlooks. The presence of these built features contributes to the garden’s integrity of *design, feeling, materials, and workmanship*, as well as *association* with the designers. The deterioration of the sculpture garden walls diminishes integrity of the original *materials*.

Integrity Summary

Based on the comparative analysis and evaluation of the landscape characteristics presented above, this study finds that the Hirshhorn Museum Sculpture Garden possesses sufficient integrity to convey the important associations of the Lester Collins period, as well as the remaining character-defining features of the Bunshaft design. The garden has a high degree of integrity of *location* as its original 1974 site on the National Mall adjacent to the Hirshhorn Museum, suggested by art critic Benjamin Forgey and agreed to by Washington’s review agencies and the Smithsonian Institution, remains unchanged. It also possesses a high degree of integrity of *setting*, owing to the continuity of several aspects of the garden since 1981. These aspects derive from three different periods of the garden’s development. The space remains in the same spatial relationship with other museum buildings on the Mall (a consequence of the compromise location for the garden agreed to in 1971) and retains aspects of the original design by Gordon Bunshaft, including its below-grade position, symmetrical disposition along the north-south axis of the Hirshhorn Museum, street level access on the south, framework of concrete retaining walls, and topography shaped by low terraces. Aspects of Lester Collins’s redesign of the sculpture garden also maintain continuity, reinforcing the integrity of setting. These include circulation within the garden, the balance of paving and sod, the location of planters and planting areas, and the physical connection to

²⁰³ Notes from SI in comments on RA 75% draft.

the National Mall through accessible ramps and central stairs. The garden's purpose as a location for the rotating outdoor display of modern and contemporary sculpture is also a part of the garden's setting, in National Register terms, as it "reflects . . . the functions it was intended to serve."²⁰⁴ The sculpture garden has served this purpose from its opening and continues to do so today.

The garden has also retained a high degree of integrity of *association* with its designers as a result of its continuity of purpose. In addition, the garden has retained the walls, ramps, stairs, planters, and paving, as well as the reflecting pool and jet fountain, that existed when it reopened in 1981, representing both Bunshaft- and Collins-designed elements. The circulation through the garden and the planned views and vistas remain intact from Collins's design, and the balance of planted areas to built areas remains consistent with the 1981 garden. As built, the sculpture garden addressed several of the issues that the Hirshhorn Museum faced when it hired Collins: wheelchair and stroller accessibility, organized circulation, protection of sculpture, and better display of sculpture. These solutions remain viable. The loss of vegetation has obscured Collins's effort to separate the garden space into outdoor "rooms," although the built features that, added to the terraces from Bunshaft's garden, create these spaces remain in place. The loss of vegetation, especially the trees he planned, also makes his means of addressing visitor comfort less visible. It is due to the loss of plant materials from Collins's original palette and their replacement by other species that this study has judged the 1981 garden to possess a moderate degree of integrity of *materials, design, and workmanship*. In general, the garden continues to convey the *feeling* of the garden as a space used for the outdoor display of sculpture, conceived as a linked sequence of spaces similar to Collins's work at Innisfree set within the framework of walls and terraces established by Bunshaft's original design. The garden also thereby retains its *association* with Collins and Bunshaft, as well as with its original purpose.

²⁰⁴ National Register Bulletin 15, 45.

Evaluation of the Period of Significance for the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden with Regard to the 1981 Redesigned Garden

Framework for Evaluating the Period of Significance

The draft National Register of Historic Places nomination for the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden determined that the resource is significant under both Criterion A, as representative of the Smithsonian Institution's growth and the diversification of its collections from the 1960s to the 1980s, and Criterion C, as an excellent example of Modernist architecture by Gordon Bunshaft, a recognized master in the field. Areas of significance cited were entertainment/recreation, architecture, and landscape architecture. The nomination also concluded that the Hirshhorn satisfied Criteria Consideration G, for properties less than fifty years old, for its association with Bunshaft, a Pritzker Prize winner, and his firm, Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, both recognized for their outstanding contributions to Modern architecture but with few works listed in the National Register. The nomination included the museum plaza and the sculpture garden "as significant features of the Hirshhorn composition, conceived as a single unit." The nomination states that the sculpture garden "is significant as it represents the controversy the design of the Hirshhorn engendered." Due to alterations to the plaza and sculpture garden, the nomination concludes that "these elements do not contribute to the individual significance of the site" under Criterion C. The changes to the plaza and sculpture garden, the nomination concludes, result in a space that, "although compatible with the original designs and consistent with their roles as settings for the display of sculpture, do not rise to the same level of significance as the original Bunshaft design." The draft nomination therefore posits a period of significance of 1974, the year in which Bunshaft's Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden opened to the public, before any changes were made.²⁰⁵

Review agencies and interested parties participating in Section 106 consultation on proposed changes to the sculpture garden requested that the Smithsonian take a closer look at the potential significance of landscape architect Lester Collins in relation to the redesign of the Hirshhorn Sculpture Garden in 1981. Student at Harvard's Graduate School of Design, then lecturer in and dean of its Landscape Architecture Department as it transitioned from a Beaux-Arts curriculum to the Modernist approach already instituted in its architecture program by Walter Gropius, Collins numbered among his students several individuals who would go on to become significant figures in the practice of Modernist landscape architecture, including Ian McHarg, Robert Zion, and Harold Breen. His private practice included collaborations with Gropius, Cesar Pelli, and Edward Durell Stone, as well as a constant flow of private, corporate, and institutional commissions up and down the east coast, encompassing projects recognized as important in the divergent fields of town planning (Miami Lakes, Florida, with Collins, Simonds and Simonds and its successor firm) and estate gardens (Innisfree, Millbrook, New York, with Walter and Marion Beck).

Three of Collins's projects have been the subject of recent landmark documentation, which has recognized him as a master landscape architect. These include the D.C. Inventory of Historic Sites Determination of Eligibility for the Smithsonian's Quadrangle Historic District, which was accepted on April 27, 2017. The nomination states that Collins "designed the garden's plantings and played a major

²⁰⁵ Marzella, National Register of Historic Places Registration Form: Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden (draft), 8:11-12.

role in implementing the planting plan over a five-year period” and concluded that Collins’s work at the Quad satisfied D.C. Designation Criterion F for “Creative Masters.”²⁰⁶ His design for the landscape treatment of Federal Office Building No. 6 (the U.S. Department of Education) was also considered a contributing feature of that property, which was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in May 2017. The landscape was later recorded by the Historic American Landscape Survey before being demolished to make way for the Dwight D. Eisenhower Memorial. A National Register nomination for Innisfree, also identifying Collins as a master landscape architect, was accepted by the Keeper of the Register on September 3, 2019. The nomination found that Innisfree satisfied Criterion C in the area of landscape architecture and Criteria Consideration G as a work of exceptional importance. National Register of Historic Places Bulletin 22, *Guidelines for Evaluating and Nominating Properties that Have Achieved Significance Within the Past Fifty Years*, states that National Register nominations may be helpful in developing context for consideration of a property’s significance, and they do so in the case of Collins.²⁰⁷

The Hirshhorn Sculpture Garden is frequently considered one of Collins’s most important projects (including by the landscape architect himself), along with Innisfree and Miami Lakes. It is also a project for which he took the lead in providing an overall concept, choosing the types and locations of plantings, developing circulation, addressing hardscape and water features, and responding to suggestions from the client and review agencies. In the design of other institutional landscapes in Washington (including the Smithsonian’s National Collection of Fine Arts – now the Smithsonian American Art Museum – and National Zoological Park, the Podium at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, and several university campuses), his responsibility was more limited. Given the acceptance of his status as a master landscape architect by three jurisdictions and the importance of the Hirshhorn Garden in the context of Collins’s career, it is important to consider his design for the garden in determining the period of significance for the property.

National Register Bulletin 22 also provides guidance on evaluating the potential significance of the Hirshhorn Sculpture Garden under Criteria Consideration G, for properties less than fifty years old. The bulletin points out that the fifty-year limit is an arbitrary threshold designed to filter out obviously ineligible properties. In some cases, the chronological boundary becomes less effective because a historic context is available that includes properties both older than fifty years and more recent. In such a case, the properties can be measured against each other, rather than against the arbitrary barrier, according to the bulletin.²⁰⁸ Such is the case with modern sculpture gardens. As discussed, consensus exists that the modern sculpture garden in the United States can be said to have begun with the temporary exhibit space at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, established in 1939, and defined more clearly with the redesign of that space in 1953 by architect Philip Johnson and landscape architect James Fanning. The practice of developing sculpture gardens in association with museums of modern and contemporary painting and sculpture began with MOMA, spread broadly across the country in the

²⁰⁶ D.P. Sefton and Richard Longstreth, D.C. Inventory of Historic Sites Application for Historic Landmark Status: Smithsonian Quadrangle Historic District, April 27, 2017, 8:19; Historic Preservation Review Board Staff Report, Case no. 17-04, Smithsonian Quadrangle Historic District, April 27, 2017, 6.

²⁰⁷ Marcella Shurfy and W. Ray Luce, National Register of Historic Places Bulletin 22, *Guidelines for Evaluating and Nominating Properties that Have Achieved Significance Within the Past Fifty Years*, U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, National Register of Historic Places, 1979, revised 1990 and 1996, 4.

²⁰⁸ Shurfy and Luce, 6-7.

1960s, and continues to the present day. The Hirshhorn Sculpture Garden, both in its original design by architect Gordon Bunshaft and its redesign by Lester Collins, is an early example of this type, possessing heightened potential significance due to the museum's status as a cultural establishment sponsored by the national government and its location in the nation's capital. Since a scholarly context exists for this landscape type, the potential exceptional importance of the Hirshhorn Sculpture Garden can be measured by comparing it to other examples of its type.

An additional context for the potential significance for the redesigned sculpture garden is its place within the movement for universal accessibility in buildings and landscapes constructed for or with money from the federal government. The first federal legislation addressing this idea became law in 1968, and an additional law, the Rehabilitation Act, was passed in 1973. The redesign of the Hirshhorn Sculpture Garden to make it accessible took place as regulations governing the implementation of the 1973 act were being developed and interpreted. While the sculpture garden redesign took place in an early wave of accessibility alterations, research for this report did not establish that a scholarly context for accessible design landmarks has been created. It is therefore not possible to evaluate the Hirshhorn Sculpture Garden's potential significance in this context.

Potential Significance of Lester Collins's Redesign of the Hirshhorn Sculpture Garden

The Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden as it exists today represents the continuity, adaptation, and evolution of the museum's purpose, as identified in its 1966 enabling legislation, and the physical space within which that purpose is manifested. Beginning as a repository for the founding collection of Joseph H. Hirshhorn, the museum has expanded its collection to include additional sculpture, as well as new forms of the art, encompassing larger sculpture, performance pieces, and environmental works. The Hirshhorn Sculpture Garden also embodies this evolution, beginning as Gordon Bunshaft's fusion of Modernist and meditative Zen garden influences in its 1974 incarnation and later being altered by Lester Collins's melding of Modernism with Chinese and Japanese traditions base on movement through space. In recent years, Hirshhorn and Smithsonian staff have taken advantage of the decline of some of Collins's plantings to open new views to recent acquisitions, in addition to installing types of artwork that had not been imagined when the garden first opened.

The Hirshhorn Sculpture Garden was one of several landscapes associated with museums of modern and contemporary art designed since the 1950s to display sculpture collections in an outdoor setting. The sculpture garden, both in its original design by Gordon Bunshaft and in Lester Collins's overlay onto the earlier framework, is among a handful of the earliest concepts for these spaces. In the survey prepared for this study, the only other sculpture gardens influenced by Asian design principles were the two by Japanese American sculptor and landscape architect Isamu Noguchi, at his own museum in New York and at the Lillie and Hugh Roy Cullen Sculpture Garden at the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston. Both of these gardens were created after the Hirshhorn (1985 and 1986, respectively). Collins's overlay onto the original garden therefore represents a unique adaptation in the sculpture garden context in its fusion of Modernist and Asian garden principles based on a landscape in which views unfold as the visitor moves through the space. This study therefore concludes that the Collins redesign contributes to the National Register significance of Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden under Criterion C as an alteration of the original garden that possesses "high artistic value."²⁰⁹

²⁰⁹ National Register Bulletin 15, 17.

The Hirshhorn redesign represents a relatively intact commission for Collins in Washington, for which he developed an overall concept that encompassed circulation, plantings, spatial organization, hardscape, accessibility, and other issues. He responded to input from clients and review agencies, as well as budget constraints, and functioned as an important voice for the project in presentations before reviewers. Commentators on Collins's career, as well as the landscape architect himself, rate the design as among his most important. Given the National Register's acceptance of Collins's status as a master landscape architect and the place of the sculpture garden in his life's work, this study concludes that his redesign of the Hirshhorn Sculpture Garden also contributes to the National Register significance of the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden under Criterion C as "the work of a master."²¹⁰

The Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden redesign also satisfies National Register Criteria Consideration G for properties less than fifty years old as a work of exceptional importance. The context by which to judge his design against other sculpture gardens has already been developed. Within this context, which begins more than fifty years ago and continues into the more recent past, Collins's redesign is a unique attempt to use the techniques of Chinese and Japanese stroll gardens to solve the problems of Bunshaft's original design for the space and to address the requirements for the outdoor display of sculpture. He used extensive vegetation to provide shade to Bunshaft's austere space and combined vegetation he selected with concrete planters and Bunshaft's grade changes to create outdoor rooms in the manner of Chinese "cup" gardens as exhibit spaces. His circulation followed the hide-and-reveal tactic of Asian gardens to draw visitors through the space, creating a design, within its context, of exceptional importance.

Recommendation

Based on this analysis, this study concludes that the 1981 redesign for the sculpture garden contributes to the National Register of Historic Places significance of the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden. For this reason, this study recommends that the museum's National Register nomination be amended to include 1981 as an additional period of significance. The period of significance for the property would therefore be "1974, 1981." The first date addresses the original design for the museum, plaza, and sculpture garden by Gordon Bunshaft, while the second acknowledges the contributions of Collins's alterations. This approach follows National Register guidelines that the period(s) of significance for properties significant under Criterion C should be "the date of construction and/or the dates of any significant alterations and additions."²¹¹

²¹⁰ Ibid., 17.

²¹¹ National Register Bulletin 16A, *How to Complete the National Register Registration Form*, U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, National Register of Historic Places, 1997, 42.

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