

THE DRAWING ROOM 16R Newtown Lane, East Hampton, NY 11937 T 631.324.5016

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Opening August 19 and running through September 13, 2004 The Drawing Room in East Hampton is pleased to present *17th-19th Century European Garden Plans*. Organized chronologically from 1686–1910, the exhibition documents landscape design for private, public and even royal gardens, with a focus on French gardens because of their strong impact on the history of landscape design. From the ordered, geometric formal plan to the “natural,” picturesque gardens imported from England in the mid-eighteenth century, through to the adaptations of private landscape design for the new public spaces of the modern era, these unusual works on paper trace changing conceptual tastes. An essay by landscape historian Eleanor M. McPeck accompanies the exhibition.

Aspects of the cartographic are evident in many of the drawings especially in *Carte de la Forest Royale de St Germain en Laye*, dated 1686. This large ink and watercolor survey of the royal hunting grounds gives us minute details of Louis XIV’s estate near Paris, with each species of tree indicated by a distinct mark. Another early French drawing dated 1730 is a breathtaking representation of the Loire Valley Chateau de Sully. The pale green river and brown inks delineate the symmetrical, axial arrangement with controlled views and geometric parterres. This plan illustrates how royal power was interpreted through the nobility’s gardens: the entire layout assumes one point of view as superior, and nature becomes its’ accomplice.

Three cadastral plans from 1788 signed by Claude-Claire Niepce, the official surveyor from the village of Chalonne-sur-Soane, offer an understanding of early land use and agronomy. With meticulous respect for his profession, Niepce measured and recorded on two oversize sheets the design of the formal gardens, vineyards and every odd shaped field and meadow of the property owned by the Gauthier family. With charming penmanship, the lots are all named in old, French, barnyard slang. To the contemporary eye, these *Plans Geometriques d’un Maison Situe à Corcelles* are fresh folk art.

By the nineteenth century the Beaux Arts academy taught watercolor techniques perfected by architects steeped in the neoclassical revival. The highly wrought watercolor designs of Toulouse architect Jules-Germain Olivier or Seheut from Nantes reveal that the architect has become both designer and artist. Olivier renders a monumental public garden entrance in the new industrial material, steel, in a masterful watercolor of a grille composed of organic curves and tendrils inspired by the nearby plantings. Two 20th century garden plans feature bold, modernist designs which contrast the earliest plans of aristocratic properties and capture the new inspiration of design for suburban plots.

This exhibition offers insight into the evolving influences and conventions in the design and use of gardens over three centuries and highlights the different techniques of recording the landscape - and the follies therein - through drawing more generally. The range of plans on view reveals that utilitarian concerns in landscape - such as the agrarian use of fields, the legal surveying of land for

taxes, and the traffic patterns of hunting parties and pleasure strolls through forests - remained inextricably linked to aesthetic considerations of the design and its recording on paper.

For further information or reproductions, please contact Susan Papa at 631.324.5016 or info@drawingroom-gallery.com.