

***PATRICIA JOHANSON
HOUSE & GARDEN***

***USDAN GALLERY
BENNINGTON COLLEGE***

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Patricia Johanson: *The House & Garden Commission*

In 1969, I wrote a series of essays and produced over a hundred plans for environmental projects. This work represents a turning point for me, from a focus on art and the making of objects to a focus on nature and the living world.

Patricia Johanson (1)

The occasion for Patricia Johanson's "turning point" was an invitation: a letter from architect James Fanning of *House & Garden* magazine asking her to design a garden. At the time, Johanson was 28 years old and on the brink of an art-world career. She moved in social circles at the heart of the New York scene. Her minimalist paintings were shown at Tibor de Nagy Gallery and the Museum of Modern Art. Her land-art installation *Stephen Long*—plywood painted red, yellow and blue running the length of an old railway bed like a rainbow—was on TV news and featured in *Vogue*. Seeing this project prompted Fanning to issue his invitation. And on the surface, the *House & Garden* assignment seemed a logical step for an up-and-coming cultural star: Johanson would conceive a chic "minimalist" garden for the home of a fashionable person, and then photographs of the finished piece would appear in the magazine.

As she did research for the project, looking at the history of garden design and, with Fanning, touring wealthy properties outside New York City, Johanson's thinking took a different turn, away from style and prestige and toward, as she says "the living world." Instead of designing a single garden, she drafted 150 garden prototypes and wrote seven thematic texts that examine the relationship between nature and society. She envisioned gardens shaped like insects and highways with parks for grazing sheep. She imagined an urban swamp, gardens of fire, and a garden of blood from a slaughterhouse. Her designs often invoke natural systems. A city takes its pattern from a leaf of chard. A walled garden curves like the human brain. Evident throughout this ambitious series is Johanson's desire to integrate constructed forms with nature, rather than imposing them on it; to attend equally to focused moments and sweeping networks; and to position people in a more sensitive and aligned relationship with the environment.

The magazine declined to publish any of it, though this was hardly a loss for the artist. Johanson embarked on studies in engineering and architecture and developed a pioneering career in ecological art for which *The House & Garden Commission* has been her wellspring. For decades, she has deployed these early drawings and texts as aides in the creation of large-scale, urban infrastructure projects that establish habitats for people and wildlife, and function simultaneously as landscape and art.

The *House & Garden Commission* is extraordinary in its consideration of Anthropocene crisis issues such as erosion, flooding, landfills, and water conservation. The project has been written about in numerous books and catalogues, situating Johanson in the context of environmental art, land art, and modernism. (2) Yet the drawings rarely have been exhibited and never as a full series, possibly because Johanson has continued to use them as working sketches for her ongoing projects, and because her multidisciplinary practice operates outside conventional art world parameters. The Usdan Gallery presentation of all 146 extant drawings (four are lost) presents the opportunity to appreciate not only Johanson's environmental prescience but also her thought processes and formal skill as a maker. Working on ordinary sketchbook paper with tools of utility—pencil and colored pencil, occasionally pen and pastel, and, in one instance, lipstick—she completed the entire *House & Garden Commission* in nine months. Seeing the drawings together, arranged in thematic grids around the gallery, makes palpable the momentum of an artist in a sustained burst of invention.

Johanson formed many of her ideas during her student years at Bennington, from 1958 to 1962. She worked closely with faculty including Paul Feeley and Tony Smith, and found mentors and connections among artists and critics in the orbit of the College, including fellow alumna Helen Frankenthaler ('49). Her undergraduate paintings, drawings, notebooks and sketchbooks show Johanson pushing herself to think in new ways about color, space, and scale—and, significantly, about the physical involvement of the audience. In 1959, she took over Feeley's office to create *Color Room*, an installation of green and black sculptural shapes, colored lights and orange paper covering the walls. Viewers became part of the work as if entering a painting, creating different compositions as they moved through the space.

After college, Johanson continued to explore the potential for painting as interactive space. Her 23-foot-long minimalist works of 1967, *Minor Keith* and *William Clark*, each have a single, horizontal stripe running the length of the canvas. Hung with the stripe at eye level, the paintings create a pedestrian experience, requiring the viewer to walk alongside to see them. As her work began to garner notice, however, Johanson began to balk at the New York art scene, the very structure that was bringing her acclaim.

She found herself turned off by the norms and expectations of the commercial art world and suspicious of critics pressuring young artists to make work that would sell. She remembers Frankenthaler advising her to "find an image and stick with it" if she wanted to succeed, something at odds with her original intentions for being an artist. "I had been a dedicated art student at Bennington, thinking I could change the world, and was suddenly thrust into the glamorous world of glitzy art parties," she recalls of her time in New York in the sixties.⁽³⁾ Her personal notes from 1964-65 include the following statement, which seems prophetic of the direction her practice eventually would take.

The saddest thing about modern art is that it doesn't relate to anything real—it no longer deals w/ life or death—or anything that goes beneath the surface. Somehow it deals w/ aesthetics on the most superficial level—it plays its own little game, & has no touchstones with what's really going on every day. (4)

Three years later, Johanson received her letter from *House & Garden*. Given her desire to delve into the realities of everyday life, one can see how she reached the "turning point" that transformed her career—though she already was moving in that direction. Her *Stephen Long* land art piece may have prompted the magazine's invitation, but in making this temporary installation, Johanson was rejecting the world of socialites and commercialism and embracing a way of working that, for her, was more "real" and offered higher stakes. *Stephen Long*, in fact, echoes back to Johanson's thinking a decade earlier with her *Color Room*, not only because the Bennington installation explores color phenomenology but because it transcends notions of art as object and implicates the physical participation of people. Johanson's game-changing move with *The House & Garden Commission*—her turning point—is at the same time a reclamation of her earliest values around being an artist, those of exploration and risk. (5)

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In considering Johanson's work leading up to *House & Garden*, Debra Bricker Balken writes that Johanson had "focused . . . at Bennington on how art could accommodate itself to the environment."⁽⁶⁾ This same focus operates at the center of *The House & Garden Commission*. We are privileged to have the opportunity to present this series and at the same time acknowledge Johanson's deep connection to the College.

In addition to providing details about works in the show, this guide includes Johanson's seven *House & Garden* texts. To contextualize the artist's pivotal activity with *House & Garden*, the exhibit also includes examples of her minimalist painting from the mid-1960s; the *Stephen Long* film, and works and ephemera from Johanson's personal archives.

Anne Thompson
Director and Curator, Suzanne Lemberg Usdan Gallery

NOTES

(1) Patricia Johanson, *Art and Survival: Creative Solutions to Environmental Problems*. Gallerie: Women Artists' Monographs, Issue 8, edited by Caffyn Kelley (North Vancouver: Gallerie Publications, 1992), p. 5.

(2) I am especially indebted to Xin Wu, who worked closely with Johanson to gather the 146 existing *House & Garden* drawings for her two-volume work *Patricia Johanson's House & Garden Commission: Reconstruction of Modernity* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 2007).

(3) Johanson's present-day reflections and a transcription of a page of her writing from 1964-65 appear in ancillary documents from François Maurisse, "Patricia Johanson: Quest for reality, color, perception and environment in her work," master's thesis, UFR d'Histoire de l'Art, Paris-Sorbonne, 2013-14.

(4) *Ibid.*

(5) *Ibid.*

(6) Debra Bricker Balken, "Patricia Johanson: The House & Garden Commission, Before and After," from *Patricia Johanson: Drawings and Models for Environmental Projects, 1969-1986*, ex. cat., The Berkshire Museum, Pittsfield, Mass., 1987, p. 17.

Patricia Johanson lives in Buskirk, New York. Her built projects include Fair Park Lagoon, Dallas (1981-86); Endangered Garden, San Francisco (1987-97); Petaluma Wetlands Park and Ellis Creek Recycling Facility, California (2001-09); and The Draw at Sugar House, Salt Lake City (2002-18). She currently is working on Mary's Garden, a remediation of mine-scarred land in Scranton, Pennsylvania; and a conversion of parking lots to wetlands at McMaster University, in Ontario, Canada. Johanson has work in public collections including the Dallas Museum of Art; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; and the National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, D.C. Her awards include fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Works in the Exhibition

The House & Garden Commission, 1969, drawings and essays

- I — Gardens By the Mile
 - . . . the Line Gardens
- II — Gardens That Are Out of Sight
 - . . . the Vanishing Point Gardens
- III — Nature and Anti-Nature
 - . . . the Artificial Garden
- IV — Gardens of the Sense and the Mind
 - . . . Illusory Gardens
- V — Gardens That Nourish, Drift, and Transform
 - . . . the Water Garden
- VI — Gardens for Highways
 - . . . Designing for Space, Time, and Motion
- VII — Garden-Cities

Individual drawings have been framed at different times over the past 40 years, always in ash supplied by Vermont Hardwoods, Chester, VT.

Additional works:

Drawing for Color Room, 1959, colored pencil on paper
Pastel Canyon, 1963, oil on canvas, 14 x 60 inches
Lipan Point (Red Space), 1964, oil on canvas, 14 x 58 1/2 inches
Stephen Long, 1968, 16mm film transferred to video
Sego Lily Dam, bronze, cast in 2013 from clay model of 2003, from
The Draw at Sugar Hill, Salt Lake City

Vitrines display material from Johanson's personal archives, including sketch- and notebooks from her student years at Bennington; personal correspondence; preparatory notes and sketches for *The House & Garden Commission*; and documents about her ecological art practice.

I — Gardens by the Mile . . . the Line Gardens

1. Lines are classic space dividers and definers. They have the ability to move through space without really occupying it — to delineate an area without really encroaching upon it — and a kind of precision, owing to their continuousness, that rarely gets lost in the clutter. Line Gardens aim at creating a dialogue between man and nature by providing an orientation to the world while preserving it intact. Art and landscape become interwoven structures that give the world form and shape and focus — making the whole world available to the person without disturbing anything that is already there.

2. Plans for Line Gardens might be "formal" or "informal," abstract or figurative, simple or complex . . . and they could be constructed of any conceivable material . . . but they should be large enough to allow for exploration and discovery. It should not be possible to "see" the plan of the line garden; rather they should be designs that you could come upon at any point . . . designs that seemed continuous and endless.

3. Specific gardens might be based on mazes so large and spatially dispersed that you would not realize they were "mazes." Large figurative compositions would develop unpredictably, while abstract designs might be related to specific aspects of the site — its colors, patterns, textures, silhouette, luminosity or gloom. Since the line would follow the natural terrain, line gardens might be flat or undulating, rugged or impassable. They should be designed such that the resulting garden could not exist apart from its particular site, for example, a simple geometric configuration moving over erratic topography might present line fragments that appeared and disappeared, and re-emerged in odd ways. Other lines might blend with their groundcover or draw attention to the environment through similarity or contrast.

4. Lines could be construed to be roads, paths, water, bridges, or causeways, and the line itself — narrowing and widening — might incorporate anything deemed necessary to the design of the garden: steps, walls, basins, furniture . . . But the intention would not be for the person to follow the line to predetermined points of interest, as in the stroll garden, processional, or allée. Rather, the line becomes a vehicle for exploring all kinds of *other* systems contained within: natural light and color, water systems, weather, plants and animals, geology . . .

5. By deciding what he will look at, the person becomes the center of the work, and there are an infinite number of scenes, instead of one. Various parts of the Line Garden would clearly realign themselves as the viewer position changed, making one acutely aware of the fact that every position in space is referred back to the spectator. Thus *walking* becomes the key to the Line Garden, as scene after scene, place after place unfolds. Multiple sensory experiences, patterns that give way to other patterns, and a profusion of details demand involvement, rather than a passing glance. In looking at ordinary little pieces of the world, we begin to sense the structure and rhythm of the universe.

6. By immersing the person in the real world and by developing an interwoven art of multiple concerns, rather than the monolithic goals of a single designer, the ideal of "classical perfection" is replaced by the ideal of cooperation and flux. The Line Garden becomes a garden of details, linkages, and transitions . . . The viewer becomes the artist . . . The sculpture becomes the place.

I — Gardens by the Mile . . . the Line Garden

(all works are 1969, on paper, 8 1/2 x 11 inches)

TOP, left to right

- 1) *Line Garden for the Le Nôtre*, pencil and colored pencil
- 2) *Line Garden for Capability Brown*, pencil and colored pencil
- 3) *Line Gardens: White Sands*, pencil, colored pencil and pastel
- 4) *Line Gardens: The Secret Life of Paths*, pencil, colored pencil

MIDDLE, left to right

- 5) *Line Gardens: Walking Fern*, pencil
- 6) *Line Gardens: Simple Geometry*, pencil and colored pencil
- 7) *Line Gardens: River-Walk*, pencil and colored pencil
- 8) *Exploring the Hills—Bird*, pencil and colored pencil

BOTTOM, left to right

- 9) *Line Gardens: Bony Labyrinth and Semicircular Canals*, pencil and colored pencil
- 10) *Line Garden: The Voices of Frogs*, pencil and colored pencil
- 11) *Flower Maze*, pencil and colored pencil
- 12) *Line Garden: The Breath of Trees*, pencil and colored pencil

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5	6	7	8
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II — Gardens That Are Out of Sight ... the Vanishing-Point Garden

1. Grandiose garden schemes of the past have always had a contiguous part-to-part relationship, so that while the whole garden was not *visible* at once, at least it was all related in a very obvious way. An aerial view was sufficient to solve the mysteries of Versailles or Chatsworth . . .

Vanishing-Point Gardens would have similar vast proportions; however the various elements would be set far enough apart so that it would not be possible to see more than one element at a time. Thus a map would be required to discern the plan of a Vanishing-Point Garden.

2. One of the advantages of such a scheme is that it would require little (if any) destruction of the existing landscape. The design of a Vanishing-Point Garden could be superimposed on any scene; however at no point would it be possible to see the total design — in fact it would never even be possible to see any two elements in relation to each other. Each part would be discrete — isolated — existing only in the context of its own surroundings.

3. One might choose any sort of configuration for such a garden; for example, a formal Vanishing-Point Garden might be based on a dodecagon, with twelve or more vanishing points. Each vanishing point would be the site of a garden. The gardens themselves could be made in any manner, since they are essentially coding, as long as they bore an obvious relationship to one another. Another possibility would be to employ color coding for the various elements . . . perhaps a "red" garden, which would appear "different" in each of its different locations.

4. Another Vanishing-Point Garden might be based on the traditional garden crossing, enlarged many times so that none of the four arms would be visible from the "crossing" and each of the arms, when seen from an end, would go out of sight. Figurative Vanishing-Point Gardens could be extremely complicated in design, with elements consisting of lines or forms, so dispersed as to read as abstract discrete "wholes." Still other Vanishing-Point Gardens might consist of hundreds or thousands of elements spread over an entire continent.

5. The chief requirements for viewing these gardens would be memory, intelligence, and time, for, in spite of the fact that one was creating an order that was completely rational, the only way one could really "see" the garden would be by piecing it together in one's mind. The sensitivity of the viewer would now assume even greater importance than the sensitivity of the garden designer.

6. One of the most interesting aspects of Vanishing-Point Gardens is that everyone would, of necessity, see something different. One might see only one part of the garden; a number of parts; or all the parts. One might see the garden over a short period of time (a few weeks) or over a very long period of time (a lifetime). Because of the amount of time involved, conditions would vary, including such obvious fluctuations as light, weather, and seasons. The direction from which one approached the various parts of the garden would be important, for this would determine what view one saw, and also what background one saw it against. The sequence in which one saw individual elements would also have a bearing on one's view of the whole. In a garden composed of different color-elements, for example, seeing the parts in any given order would be essentially different than seeing the parts in any of the other possible color sequences. One's attitude toward the garden as a whole would probably also change as one gathered more of the pieces together in one's mind. If there were ten parts to the garden, for example, one would certainly view the first part differently than the fifth or the tenth; thus, the importance of cumulative experience in "seeing."

7. Perceptually, one could only view a Vanishing-Point Garden as a series of unrelated occurrences (landmarks). Conceptually, it would take on the character of a unified whole . . . an invisible order that one nonetheless *knew* existed.

II — Gardens That Are Out of Sight
... the Vanishing-Point Garden

(all works are 1969, on paper, 8 1/2 x 11 inches)

TOP, left to right

- 1) *Red Garden*, pencil, colored pencil, pastel and ink
- 2) *Figurative Vanishing-Point Garden (for Matisse)*, pencil and charcoal
- 3) *Boa-Ridges*, pencil, colored pencil and ink
- 4) *Vanishing-Point Gardens: Mask /Garden #2 Eye*, pencil and colored pencil
- 5) *Vanishing-Point Gardens: Mask /Garden #3 Nose*, pencil and colored pencil

MIDDLE, left to right

- 6) *Scarlet Snake: Plan of Garden*, pencil and colored pencil
- 7) *The Crossing*, pencil and colored pencil
- 8) *Linked Gardens—(Bobolink)*, pencil and colored pencil
- 9) *Vanishing-Point Gardens: Mask /Garden*, pencil
- 10) *Vanishing-Point Gardens: Mask /Garden #4 Mouth*, pencil

BOTTOM, left to right

- 11) *Gardens of Vigilance, Terror, Survival, & Hope (Walking to Freedom)*, pencil and colored pencil
- 12) *Vanishing-Point Gardens: Sacred Trees Pencil*, colored pencil and ink
- 13) *Vanishing-Point Gardens: Chalk Circle*, pencil and colored pencil
- 14) *Vanishing-Point Gardens: Turtle Constellation*, pencil and charcoal
- 15) *Vanishing-Point Gardens: Mask*, pencil

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III — Nature and Anti-Nature . . . the Artificial Garden

1. We take our environment for granted. Nature has been imprinted on our brains, therefore it is rarely necessary to consider it. The history of landscape architecture has been a chronicle of shifting styles; at certain periods art has imitated nature; at other times nature has been molded and clipped into the forms of art. But in either case — whether “formal” or “naturalistic” — the history of garden design has been largely a matter of aesthetic composition. Perhaps it is only by removing ourselves from nature entirely that we might really begin to see it . . . how it *functions* instead of merely how it works.

2. Artificial Gardens would contain no living elements . . . that is, they would consist entirely of materials such as aluminum, sand, mirror, outdoor carpet, redwood, stainless steel, natural rock . . . Elemental Artificial Gardens might re-create simple landforms — the hill, the desert, the gully — on a vast scale, in nonliving materials. Thus “landscape” becomes environmental sculpture and a given material, with its peculiar color, texture, sound, temperature, glow, would be translated into pure space. Such gardens should emerge not as picturesque folly but rather as an inquiry into the psychology of various forms and materials. They see the essence of “hill” or “desert” . . . stone or steel . . . both as things in themselves and also in regard to their meaning for us. Artificial Gardens seek to design landscapes not in terms of *style* but rather in terms of inner responses to basic forms and materials.

3. Surrogate meadows, valleys, mountains, caverns, plateaus would provide direct personal experience of the “landscape” at hand. Yet metaphorical topography remains firmly rooted in the world of art . . . not life. Such landscapes would emerge as gardens of the eye and the mind, having neither the complexity nor the open-endedness of true nature, with its superimposed and overlapping patterns and its capacity for self-regeneration and “change.” Artificial Gardens speak to the issue of “corpses” of all kinds — mummies, stuffed animals, preserved insects, artificial rocks, plastic plants . . . They are not meant to expunge nature. Rather, they demonstrate the vast gap between art and life . . . between how a thing “looks” and how it “behaves.”

4. Looking toward a future on other planets, one must recognize the value of Artificial Gardens, not only to provide echoes of nature as we

move through it, and provides an intimate, personal confrontation with the plants and animals that live there. The cornfield puts you *inside* the object, rather than making you an outside observer. It allows for intense focus (on any of a million details) or no focus at all (reverie: a dream). By suspending objective, measurable space in favor of myriad detail, one arrives at a garden of effects and of personal freedom. Illusory Gardens are designed to provide inner renewal — to stimulate memory and fantasy by reaching out to our past, present, and future selves.

4. Landscapes that are slightly “empty,” ecologically complex, or composed of insubstantial or transient effects are most likely to allow us to come in contact with ourselves. Illusory Gardens might consist of shadows that transform according to the angle of natural light (time of day). Shadow gardens constructed on erratic or undulating topography would produce otherworldly effects. Fire gardens would mesmerize both through light and heat. Gardens of filtered light, colored light, and shafts of light (color and light reverberating in space; air and light made palpable) would change on a daily and seasonal basis and with varying weather conditions. Ordinary forest, with its shadows, reflections, and shifting, sparkling spots of sunlight, automatically creates a mood of contemplation and intimacy. Superimposed and overlapping designs would present multiple and contradictory truths, and would appeal to subjective reality, while animal gardens would provide the kind of inner-outer pull that allows you to lose yourself in the scene.

5. By designing gardens that go beyond the intellect — that are emotional, sensual, and evocative — we aim for inner worlds — for the chance to find possibilities within ourselves and create our own order, and develop a capacity for empathy that lets us see ourselves as “not separate.”

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III — Nature and Anti-Nature... the Artificial Garden

(all works are 1969, on paper, 8 1/2 x 11 inches)

TOP, left to right

- 1) *Death Landscape (Driftwood) – Artificial Garden*, pencil
- 2) *Moss Garden (Villi): The Protective Sponge*, pencil and colored pencil
- 3) *Artificial Garden: Plateaus and Sinks*, pencil and colored pencil
- 4) *Starry Night – Artificial Garden*, pencil and colored pencil
- 5) *Black Garden (for Georgia)*, pencil and charcoal

MIDDLE, left to right

- 6) *Path Through the Woods*, Pencil
- 7) *Garden of Sulphur & Tar (for Bob)*, pencil, colored pencil, pastel and ink
- 8) *Walking Through the Sky—Artificial Garden*, pencil, colored pencil and pastel
- 9) *Valley of Ten Thousand Smokes (Steam)*, pencil and colored pencil
- 10) *The Garden of Ten Thousand Sculptures*, pencil

BOTTOM, left to right

- 11) *Grains of Sand—Artificial Garden*, pencil and colored pencil
- 12) *Cloud-Water-Rock (Artificial Mountain)*, pencil and charcoal
- 13) *Gravel Mountain—Artificial Garden*, pencil
- 14) *Vessel: Garden the Reveals the Structure, Poetry & Properties of Clay*, pencil and colored pencil
- 15) *Garden of Spontaneous Combustion—Lignite*, pencil and colored pencil
- 16) *Sculptural Artificial Garden (Internal Landscape)*, pencil, colored pencil and pastel

IV — Gardens of the Senses and the Mind ... Illusory Gardens

1. Illusory Gardens aim at creating moods . . . a total immersion in the feeling of the place. They are oriented to sensory experience rather than to predigested history, knowledge, or culture, in the hope that each person will be able to find his own meaning and make his own connections. Illusory Gardens aim at recapturing a sense of wonder by [our] being absorbed into the garden, rather than looking at it from the outside. They should let us see that we are not separate from the world we live in but rather *part of it* — perhaps particularly important in an age when everything is characterized by clarity, separation, distance, hierarchy, and domination.

2. Illusory Gardens might be designed to capture fleeting effects of natural color, light, and weather: sheets of water spaced to reflect the red, pink, purple, and blue of the setting sun; gardens of polished stone — marble or granite — to reflect sky and clouds; gardens of fog and mist designed to reflect changes in temperature. A garden of jet- black mirrors could be created by using water rich in tannic acid. Fountains of "blood" could be produced by water flowing over rocks rich in hematite. And gardens of multicolored topography (combined "painting" and "sculpture") along the shores of pools or ponds would mix color-reflections in water, as the Impressionists mixed them in the eye of the beholder. Further mixing of real and reflected color would occur with plants, leaves, or algae floating on the surface. Such surface effects would also break up the "mirror image," making it discontinuous and abstract.

3. Gardens of magical effects are gardens of firsthand, *personal* knowledge; sensory experience connects to *inner* experience, generating designs in the mind that vary with the individual. Sights, sounds, smells, scale-relationships, the texture, temperature, and "feel" of things trigger subjective and multiple realities. In order for Illusory Gardens to be able to strike a responsive chord in different kinds of people, and to appeal to the many people in each of us, it is important for them to combine simple design with sensory complexity. A simple cornfield, for example, is more experiential than most environmental art, providing a myriad of sights, sounds, and smells. It literally touches you, closing around you as you

move through it, and provides an intimate, personal confrontation with the plants and animals that live there. The cornfield puts you *inside* the object, rather than making you an outside observer. It allows for intense focus (on any of a million details) or no focus at all (reverie: a dream). By suspending objective, measurable space in favor of myriad detail, one arrives at a garden of effects and of personal freedom. Illusory Gardens are designed to provide inner renewal— to stimulate memory and fantasy by reaching out to our past, present, and future selves.

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IV — Gardens of the Senses and the Mind . . . Illusory Gardens

(all works are 1969, paper, 8 1/2 x 11 inches)

TOP, left to right

- 1) *The Fixed Stare of Eternity (Illusory Garden)*, pencil and colored pencil
- 2) *Air*, pencil, colored pencil, and pastel
- 3) *Secret Garden*, pencil
- 4) *Illusory Garden: Mineral Pools*, pencil and colored pencil
- 5) *Garden of Ghosts—(Ground Fog)*, pencil and colored pencil
- 6) *Flower-Park (Grassy Knolls with Trees & Shadows)*, pencil and colored pencil
- 7) *Red + Blue Cliffs: Illusory Gardens*, pencil and colored pencil

MIDDLE, left to right

- 8) *The Eye of the Beholder*, pencil, colored pencil and pastel
- 9) *Field of Grass—Big Bluestem*, pencil
- 10) *Illusory Garden: Cornfield*, pencil and colored pencil
- 11) *Drum*, pencil and colored pencil
- 12) *Stars + Fireflies (The Union of Heaven + Earth)*, pencil and colored pencil
- 13) *Garden of Organized Killing / Soil Fertility*, pencil and colored pencil
- 14) *Garden of the Immortals—(Rot)*, pencil

BOTTOM, left to right

- 15) *Garden of Cracks & Tracks*, pencil and charcoal
- 16) *Mutable Garden: Snake / Butterfly*, pencil, colored pencil and ink
- 17) *Garden That Is Felt Underfoot*, pencil and colored pencil
- 18) *Clouds That Walk the Earth*, pencil
- 19) *Urban Fire Garden (Illusory Garden)*, pencil and colored pencil
- 20) *Fire-Fountain*, pencil and colored pencil
- 21) *Every Garden Scheme Should Have a Backbone*, pencil and colored pencil
- 22) *Garden of Lamentations*, pencil

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8	9	10	11	12	13	14	22
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	

V — Gardens That Nourish, Drift, and Transform ... the Water Garden

1. The art of survival—systems that provide pure drinking water, food, and flood control—has produced some of the most beautiful gardens in the world. Roman aqueducts, Inca irrigation and terracing, Filipino rice paddies, American strip farming, and the vast networks of jetties, dams, and levees along our major rivers are totally functional yet also totally aesthetic. Modern "water gardens" might combine art and public access with basic engineering structures—dams, reservoirs, and irrigation channels; levees, drainage systems, and sumps; water for industrial and mechanical uses; pumped storage generating plants—to provide places for social interaction and recreation . . . "fountains" and "gardens" on a vast scale.

2. If water control is the mark of civilization, and water the source of all life, then people should be able to come into contact with the technology, ecology, and beauty of these specialized landscapes. Water Gardens might consist of "food parks"—irrigated orchards or cropland, ocean or freshwater farms—interwoven with parkland. Massive waterworks, on the scale of those that ran nineteenth-century machinery and provide twentieth-century flood control, could be conceived of as huge "fountains" or public parks. Seawalls might define waterfalls, or water-rooms. Even tiny amounts of water, such as passive pools of makeup water for air-conditioners, could become the centerpiece for a miniature landscape. And chunks of watery nature: lakes and ponds, streams and rivers, marsh, estuary, and ocean could use "art" to provide access, and be maintained as "living museums" of native plants and animals.

3. The poetry of water, like clouds, has much to do with the fact that it is ever changing. Sculpture gardens might be composed of drifting "islands"—either abstract or figurative "jigsaws." Allowed to float freely within an encircling "reef," the islands could provide an infinitely varied "composition." As individual units, allowed to drift anywhere in the world, they would become fragments of a lost landscape.

4. Ice fountains could be designed in conjunction with flowing water, which would eat away at the frozen forms, revealing flow patterns. Other gardens could be activated by rainwater or melting snow, for example, a sculptural landscape or maze, where depressions filled with water, leaving a network of "paths" and "pools." "Sculpture" could also transform into "fountains," with waterfalls and channels activated by the rain.

5. Topographical "tidal gardens," fully accessible at low tide, might turn into waterfalls, channels, and pools as the water flowed in. At high tide only a network of causeways and islands would remain. Tidal houses and cities might let water flow through the house or city at high tide. These cyclic gardens could be tied to engineering projects (like rivers that overflow their banks on a seasonal cycle) and could be designed both functionally—man's need to cope with nature—and poetically, as works of art.

6. Other Water Gardens might offer clues as to what is below the surface, which would be revealed by a seasonal lowering of the water level. Underwater "sculpture parks," designed as passages through the natural environment, might similarly offer clues as to what is down there but would be meant to be experienced and explored. An underwater "zoo/sculpture garden" might be composed of sculptural chambers and crevices and plastic ribbon-like forms that would move with the water and become covered with algae for fish to graze on.

7. Since forms connected with water are continually in the process of being built up, reshaped, worn down, and encrusted with living, and nonliving, matter, Water Gardens should be designed with an eye to what they will *become*. By incorporating agriculture and engineering, the physical and psychological needs of people, and the needs of the land itself (plants and animals in their natural habitats), the Water Garden becomes the art of survival.

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V — Gardens That Nourish, Drift, and Transform .
 . . the Water Garden

(all works are 1969, paper, 8 1/2 x 11 inches)

TOP, left to right

- 1) *Sculpted Flood Plain*, pencil and colored pencil
- 2) *Dredged Garden—Food Park*, pencil and colored pencil
- 3) *Garden of Powerful Forces (The Shape of the Shore)*, pencil
- 4) *Ridges & Furrows—(Coastal Fog)*, pencil and colored pencil
- 5) *Water Gardens: Flood Basins + Waterfalls*, pencil
- 6) *Municipal Water Gardens—(Channels)*, pencil and colored pencil
- 7) *Erosion Garden: (Seawall, With Ocean Walk & Tide-Pool Sculpture Garden)*, pencil and colored pencil
- 8) *Tidal House*, pencil and colored pencil
- 9) *Tidal Garden*, pencil, colored pencil, and ink
- 10) *Garden of Dissolution and Development*, pencil and charcoal

MIDDLE, left to right

- 11) *Toxic Rainbow*, pencil and colored pencil
- 12) *Butterfly Parks—with Jetties*, pencil and colored pencil
- 13) *Nurturing Highways*, pencil and colored pencil
- 14) *Municipal Water Gardens—(Lakes)*, pencil
- 15) *Frame Through Which the Garden Flows*, pencil and colored pencil
- 16) *Water Gardens: Stormwater Runoff*, pencil
- 17) *Water Gardens: Dew Ponds*, pencil on paper
- 18) *Floating Sculpture-Park (Lagoon With Drifting Islands)*, pencil and colored pencil
- 19) *Artificial Islands*, pencil and charcoal
- 20) *Migrating Garden*, pencil and colored pencil

BOTTOM, left to right

- 21) *Porifera Zoo and Sculpture Garden*, pencil and colored pencil
- 22) *Food Park: Oysters*, pencil and colored pencil
- 23) *Ridges & Furrows—(Agriculture)*, pencil and charcoal
- 24) *Liferafts (Pangaea)*, pencil and colored pencil
- 25) *Ocean Water-Gardens*, pencil
- 26) *Sargasso Safari (Plan)*, pencil and colored pencil
- 27) *Underwater Sculpture/Reef/Marine Habitat*, pencil and colored pencil
- 28) *Water-Gathering Sculptures*, pencil
- 29) *Garden that Drifts with the Current*, pencil and colored pencil

VI — Gardens for Highways

. . . Designing for Space, Time, and Motion

1. Highways are potentially the largest gardens in the world, and, unlike National Parks and wilderness areas, they are places that we come in contact with on a daily basis. Because we tend to see these great achievements as functional and ordinary, we fail to recognize the extraordinary possibilities for developing regional gardens, art, and multipurpose activities within our highway system.

2. Highway Gardens, for people within the vehicle, are gardens of continuous transition, structured in real time and space. Road experience is basically linear and therefore related to music, theater, cinema . . . but unlike these forms which "develop" from beginning to end, highway aesthetics (like the genetic code) must satisfy no matter what "parts" are encountered. While the shape of the design as a whole (recurring themes, composition) might be significant, moment to moment experience (rhythm, melody, harmony, tempo) would be primary, since the design would be seen forward, in reverse, and in varying segments, by different people at different times. The nature of Highway Gardens would thus be episodic, sequential, and cumulative.

3. Parts of the highway itself might be incorporated into vast "image gardens," to be seen in conjunction with widely spaced elements on the right-of-way. These parts of the highway might be differentiated by means of color or texture, and the related gardens could provide functional amenities. Processions of gardens or monuments not only provide a sense of progress toward a goal — they might also reveal patterns over time. Highways themselves provide basic sculptural experience as they move over the land, alternatively revealing and concealing objects and presenting the same thing in different contexts. A Highway Garden might be designed in conjunction with topography, such that radically different images would appear as the viewer moved around it. And narrative designs might result from a succession of images or views.

4. Speed would be a major consideration in determining the size and frequency of the gardens, and it would also be important to know the tenor of the audience. Local roads frequently have local goals. Scenic routes are oriented to people who are predisposed to look intently at the "novel" or the "beautiful." And commuter roads are occupied mainly by

people who know what is there, and are inured to it. By designing for specific reasons and groups of people, our highways might recapture some sense of character and place, instead of the antiseptic monotony that stretches from coast to coast.

5. Regional Highway Gardens should organize, intensify, and clarify what is already there—the history, geography, geology, and ecology of each particular place, which could be transmitted by means of individual gardens and organized into a larger work of art (designs within designs). Native scrub, swamp, forests, meadows, wildflowers—low-maintenance and self-perpetuating landscapes—would be preferable to mowed greensward (the "homogenous ideal"). Works of art should be developed in conjunction with the color, texture, light, topography, and geology of each specific site; and the functional needs of highways themselves—especially erosion control and drainage systems—could be incorporated into huge gardens of channels, pools, and waterfalls. Local needs should be assimilated into these roadside public spaces, so that highway gardens would be not only visual but also functional. By locating activities along the right-of-way, highways would become unifying elements that linked communities instead of dividing them.

6. Perhaps the greatest need, as well as the greatest opportunities, would exist along roads that move through "ugly," underprivileged, or industrial areas. By concentrating on orientation and organization, and designs that are simple, useful, and local, it is possible to provide relationships between people and any environment. Highway Gardens for commuters (or any other disinterested audience) might simply connect existing monuments to provide a sense of location and progress, or concentrate on objects that reflect daily and seasonal "effects" so that they always *seemed* different. Such designs are related to ritual—like Greek drama, which depends on a knowledge of the plot for its greatest effect.

7. Highways offer an unparalleled opportunity for dealing with functional projects creatively—especially if seen in the context of music, dance, and theater. Multidimensional Highway Gardens might be as simple, and as complex, as a song, which can be listened to for its words, rhythm, harmony, mood . . . or simply become part of the background. Other Highway Gardens might be based on rhythm or counterpoint. Monuments and landforms could be choreographed in terms of shifting

spatial relations. Motion parallax (which makes foreground, middle ground, and background seem to move at different speeds as one drives through the landscape) could be employed to develop a ballet of gardens and objects in space. Varying configurations and compositions—close-up, fragment, panorama—would appear and dissolve to the spectator in motion . . . For people in vehicles, Highway Gardens would provide theatrical experience, and an index to the local scene and its inhabitants, as they viewed people engaged in various activities. Conversely, by integrating the highway into neighborhoods, these gardens would become art that provides a framework for life, with the highway itself as “sculpture” and “theater.” Highway Gardens invite people to explore the world by providing interwoven systems—places within places—and by organizing and presenting the world as a work of art.

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VI — Highway Gardens

(all works are 1969, paper, 8 1/2 x 11 inches)

TOP left to right

- 1) *Highway Gardens*, pencil
- 2) *Odalisque*, pencil and colored pencil
- 3) *Highway Gardens: Vacant Lots*, pencil and colored pencil
- 4) *Animal Garden: Otter Square*, pencil and colored pencil
- 5) *Highway Gardens: Water*, pencil and colored pencil
- 6) *Industrial Park*, pencil, colored pencil and ink
- 7) *Highway Gardens: Gas Tanks*, pencil and colored pencil

MIDDLE left to right

- 8) *Regional Highway Gardens: Snow & Ice*, pencil and colored pencil
- 9) *Highway Drainage: Pools & Waterfalls*, pencil and colored pencil
- 10) *Garden of Personal Experience: Rattlesnakes*,
pencil and colored pencil
- 11) *Garden of Personal Experience: Lightning*, pencil and colored pencil
- 12) *Trail of Spider Woman: Interstate Natural Highway System*,
pencil and colored pencil
- 13) *Highway Garden: Man*, pencil
- 14) *Highway Garden with Multiple Forms Functions Images*,
pencil and colored pencil
- 15) *Coal Garden*, pencil and colored pencil

BOTTOM left to right

- 16) *Regional Highway Gardens: Snowmelt*, pencil
- 17) *Highway Gardens: Wind Gardens*, pencil and colored pencil
- 18) *Regional Highway Gardens: Deer Crossing*, pencil and colored pencil
- 19) *Regional Highway Gardens: Pig Society*, pencil and colored pencil
- 20) *Regional Highway Gardens: Muskrats*, pencil and colored pencil
- 21) *Regional Highway Gardens: Nature Walk*, pencil and colored pencil
- 22) *History of the Highway: Debris Gardens*, pencil

VII — Garden-Cities

1. Cities, while seemingly complex, are actually simple constructs, functioning solely in terms of man's monolithic needs. "Progress" in cities stems mainly from the development of better or faster ways of making money. Nature, on the other hand, is truly complex—a living organism that functions in terms of the interaction and survival of *all* of its inhabitants . . . a tangled web of associations and interactions where individuals are constantly cooperating; readjusting; changing. Perhaps the most dismal development in recent years has been the gobbling up of farmland and wilderness by suburban developers. These pseudo-cities—neither urban nor rural—are doubly exclusive, excluding not only people but the earth itself. It would seem that the time has come for the creation of a vast new *public* landscape; for the creation of a new meeting grounds; for designs that are *inclusive* rather than exclusive. By interweaving man's construct with the profuse phenomenon of nature—water, geological formations, plants and animals in their natural habitats—it might be possible to shift away from a world oriented to power and profit, to a world oriented to *life*. Such publicly acquired land should be in direct opposition to suburbs, which transfer the commercial values of the city to the country so that nature becomes a commodity, to be sold and destroyed. Rather, these lands should exist solely as functioning examples of man's relationship to the earth and to other living things, through a direct confrontation with agriculture, other human beings, and the natural order.

2. Garden-Cities could be designed in any manner, but the aim would be to interweave intense urbanization (including housing) with large tracts of farmland, untouched wilderness, and public parks. Cities might be conceived of as a collection of decentralized districts, each related to its surrounding landscape. Having *real* forests, meadows, marshes, streams within the city would intensify both urban and rural experience, and would provide places that are educational and renewing. Native habitats, with their ecological associations, would become "living museums" that re-establish relationships between people and the natural order (unlike zoos, which entertain at the expense of other living things). Preservation would be the key element in planning these ecology gardens, which would simply be demarcated and made accessible.

3. Public parks, on the other hand, should be oriented to multiple and overlapping recreational, educational, and entertainment functions, and could be designed as vast sculptural environments that combined art and topography, thus making both "art" and "landscape" available to the general public. Derelict land, in particular, might be reclaimed for public use, and environmental sculpture could be conceived of as "shelter" or "housing." Sculpture parks might be designed as magical environments or "color-space" by choosing a palette that would reverberate the colors of nature, art, and the city. Parks need not conform to any particular image—in fact, uniqueness would be a virtue—as long as they were friendly, functional, open-ended, and related to the people who used them.

4. Agricultural land—crops, orchards, pasture—is both aesthetic and functional. It preserves and maintains the land while providing us with a sense of our dependence on the earth. Public farmland—pastures, crops, flower and vegetable gardens—could provide jobs and food for people who need them, as well as aesthetic open space. Domestic animals (cows, sheep, ducks, geese) could be incorporated into "animal gardens," whose boundaries would be defined by natural landforms or topographical sculpture. Because such animals are alternatively aloof and engaging, they provide both a sense of connectedness and a sense of "the other."

5. Garden-Cities should be *both* intensely urban and intensely rural. They should help us see not only that the earth is alive but also how we "fit in." The three types of gardens are intended provide a range of social and man-nature interactions. Ecology landscapes, for example, are indigenous, self-maintaining, and evolving. Seeing the marsh as food and housing helps us see *ourselves* as food and housing. It gives us insight into our own body as a universe filled with life — weather systems, landforms, plants and animals. Agricultural gardens (the art of survival through our own efforts) and parks (which provide for a mix of social and economic groups) foster individualism and community through primary experience. Traditionally, the built world has had little regard for the living world. By interweaving genuine urban and rural experience we provide a set of counter-forces, and a set of models that are inclusive and oriented to life.

6. As cities fit into landscapes, architecture might also be fit into the earth. Buildings could use landforms as protection in the same way that many animals find or create shelters within the earth. Other buildings might interact with the elements: houses designed as water systems or musical instruments. Architecture as landscape embodies the principle of transformation; it substitutes "flow" for "objects." Buildings that *become* their site and change in time help us see that we *are* the environment and will *become* the plant, the animal, the water, the soil . . .

7. New Garden-Cities, acknowledging that water, topography, and geology have always been the greatest city planners, might take the landscape as a starting point, working with the structures and inhabitants that are already there. The city itself could be designed as a vast sculpture, not by means of monumental buildings (Brasilia, Chandigarh) but rather through the use of basic access systems that would reveal city-districts sculpturally, in terms of panorama, vista, exploration, and intimate confrontation. Garden-Cities might consist entirely of "connections," with everything in between either "infilled" or left intact. By designing the city in terms of "circulation" and "major organs"—with vast intervening tracts of public landscape—we allow the earth to live, and provide opportunities both for present and future generations.

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VII — Garden-Cities

(all works are 1969, on paper, 8 1/2 x 11 inches)

TOP left to right

- 1) *Garden-Cities (Brassica Oleracea)*, pencil and colored pencil
- 2) *Garden-Cities (Brassica Oleracea)*, pencil
- 3) *Living Apartment Houses*, pencil and colored pencil
- 4) *Garden-Cities: Suburban Wilderness*, pencil and colored pencil
- 5) *Garden-Cities / Ecology Garden: Forest*, pencil and colored pencil
- 6) *Field of Worms (Project for a Fallow Field)*, pencil
- 7) *High-Rise Living: Trellis*, pencil and colored pencil
- 8) *Urban Landscape: Swamp for the Center of a City*, pencil
- 9) *Building That Cleans Its Own Water*, pencil and colored pencil
- 10) *Building That Collects Water*, pencil, colored pencil and pastel

MIDDLE left to right

- 11) *Urban Landscape: Swamp for the Center of a City*, pencil and colored pencil
- 12) *Cabbage City*, pencil and colored pencil
- 13) *Urban Forest (Catkins)*, pencil and colored pencil
- 14) *Urban Landscape: River (Fountain + Plaza)*, pencil
- 15) *Watery Urban Plaza (River)*, pencil and colored pencil
- 16) *Garden-Cities: Aerial Highway*, pencil and colored pencil
- 17) *Fountain*, pencil and colored pencil
- 18) *Folly: Tiny Villas with Fountains & Cascade*, pencil and colored pencil
- 19) *Sculpture Garden: Shelter*, pencil and lipstick
- 20) *Urban Playground, Mountain Forest Stream*, pencil and colored pencil

BOTTOM left to right

- 21) *Rubble Lake*, pencil and colored pencil
- 22) *The Grande Allée: Truck Route*, pencil and colored pencil
- 23) *Garden-Cities: Skyline Trail*, pencil and colored pencil
- 24) *Garden-Cities: Turtle-Mound*, pen and pencil
- 25) *Garden-Cities: Turtle-Mound*, pencil
- 26) *Tropical Gardens*, pencil and colored pencil
- 27) *Garden - Cities: Food Park*, pencil and colored pencil
- 28) *Garbage Garden (The Functional Landscape)*, pencil
- 29) *Urban Agriculture: Honeybees*, pencil and colored pencil

**Patricia Johanson: House & Garden
events and programming**

_Artist's talk by Patricia Johanson, March 24, Tishman Auditorium, 7 pm

_Lecture by Xin Wu, associate professor of art history at William & Mary and author of *Patricia Johanson's House and Garden Commission: Reconstruction of Modernity*, April 23, Tishman Auditorium, 7 pm

Senses in the Landscape: HEARING, SEEING, TASTING

Works by Neil Leonard, Tory Fair, and Ben Hall and Marina Zurkow
(February-May)

This series of landscape-based works extends from Johanson's writing about gardens "oriented to sensory experience . . . [that] let us see that we are not separate from the world we live in but rather part of it."

_Leonard's electroacoustic composition *Sonance for the Precession* plays for 30 minutes daily a half-hour before sunset, exploring ancient ideas connecting the movement of the equinox with the harmonic series.

_Fair forms a digital-age reinvention of land artist Mary Miss's *Portable Window* (1968), a wooden wheel with a cut-out rectangle to frame landscape vistas. Fair's iPhone-shaped window invites reflection on immediate versus mediated views.

_Zurkow and Hall complicate our notions of what constitutes native, invasive, old, and new with a cooking/dining event using foraged plants.

Patricia Johanson: House & Garden was organized by Anne Thompson, director and curator of Usdan Gallery.

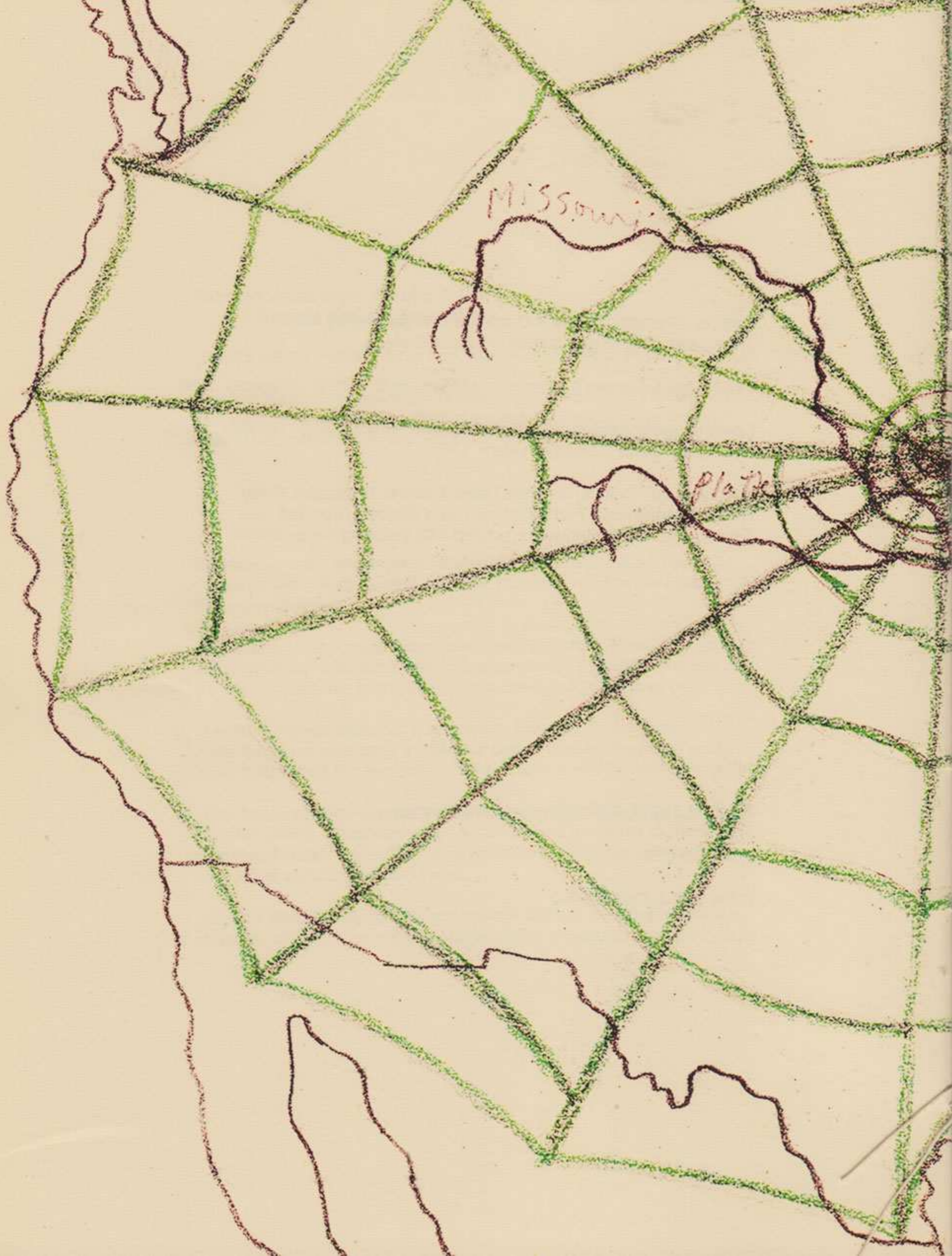
The House & Garden Commission essays are © Patricia Johanson, 1969.

Cover image is a detail of Patricia Johanson, *Trail of Spider Woman: Interstate Natural Highway System*, 1969.

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Missouri

Platte