

Romantic Gardens: Nature, Art and Landscape Design

Elizabeth Barlow Rogers, Elizabeth Eustis, John Bidwell



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The Romantic Movement, its seeds planted in the seventeenth century, became the ascendant philosophical and aesthetic ethos of the nineteenth century. The opposite of Classicism, with its regard for order, rationality, rules, and balance, Romanticism gave primacy to the imagination, to the senses, to intuition and inspiration, putting a premium on the spectacular, the mysterious, the dramatic. Above all, its emphasis was faith in the self, in the individual. As a movement, Romanticism has been minutely examined in the genres of music, literature, and art. But in this comprehensive survey, we see its development in that most transient manifestation of human effort: the garden.

Romantic gardens were a source of sensory delight, moral instruction, spiritual insight, and artistic inspiration. Here nature stimulated reverie and sentiment. Rustic structures, inscribed monuments, sweeping vistas, and naturalistic lakes and cascades were elements in an ever-changing panorama. Nature, and by extension, gardens were expected to stir the imagination, to clear the mind, to relieve the soul of its burdens, to provide both solace and salvation.

In this book, containing a lengthy introductory essay on the nature of Romanticism, the authors demonstrate, through drawings and designs, watercolors, and engravings, a narrative of the course of Romanticism in Europe and America, where the landscape ideals of the creators of private gardens were translated into the designs for public parks. Here, illustrated in full color and described in detail, are the books, the essays, the prints, and the manuscripts that served as core documents of the Romantic Movement. In this impressive survey, Godine has joined with the Morgan Library and Museum and the Foundation for Landscape Studies to assemble a splendid array of seminal texts alongside outstanding works of art. The result is a scholarly and accessible book that reveals and illuminates the origins and impact of the movement that dominated both Europe and America between 1700 and 1900 in the realm of the garden.

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