A place for mutual reconciliation and peace?

Aalborg Botanic Garden a experience of simultaneous visions.
Bridging the north-south… Cross-cultural understanding in tourism.

Utzon center
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The great glass house
National Botanic garden
Of Wales Cardiff 2008
Nicholas Grimshaw
The concept of the Botanic garden
The concept of the Botanic garden

The Botanic Garden or the Peace Park consists of six conceptual parts. The concept and intention of the park is that knowing the metaphysical roots and fundament of other cultures can create an urban environment rich in experience for embodied learning and mutual understanding. The park is an attempt to create a modern, contemporary, green heart for the city of Aalborg.

The Botanic garden is a place for reflection, tranquility, but also unpredictable interruptions and new interactive experiences, the garden has several layers, the actual physical, the virtual, the metaphysical symbolic and metaphorical layers are interwoven as a web.
The concept of the Botanic garden

1. Five squares of the five **monotheistic** religions introduced: Christianity, Buddhism, Islam Judaism and Hindu.
2. The two islands contain parts of Greek mythology and Shinto.
3. Nordic mythology is a part of the Crystal Forest.
4. “The writer’s path” leads from east to west, introducing past and contemporary writing & storytelling through an online interactive multimedia platform. You can walk the book or poem of the day or the writer of the week. The park becomes a book.
5. The lake and the canals are the core of the park and lead from east to west and further south.
6. The orangery and echo house introducing exotic plants and flowers.

It is all about creating a representation of heaven on earth, but heaven has a counterpart and it has to be represented as well. But in a learning context that offers a place for reflection.
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The writers path online and actual

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The metaphysic layer

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The virtual layer

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Stages a layer of virtual and performative platforms

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Borgund Stave Church in Lærdal. The timber used in the building was cut down the winter 1180-81.
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Five squares of the five *monotheistic* religions introduced: Christianity, Buddhism, Islam Judaism and Hindu.
place and spirituality.

In Homer’s Odyssey Book XVII, Odyssey describes a sacred grove: “When they had got over the rough steep ground and were nearing the city, they reached the fountain from which the citizens drew their water. This had been made by Ithacus, Meritus, and Polycor. There was a grove of water loving poplars planted in a circle all round it, and the clear cold water came down to it from a rock high up, while above the fountain there was an altar to the nymphs, at which all wayfarers used to sacrifice.”

In Greece, there was a special link between place and spirituality. First of all, the nature and the landscape were sacred, the place itself was holy, and it embodied a deity as a part of the natural forces. And the building was placed there to praise that god, demigod or group of gods. The Nymphs lived in caves, and Naiads who lived by the fountains were half human demigods, so they where mortal.
All things are numbered

Geometry was also essential for the Greek. The Pythagorean School originated the belief that “all things are numbered.” Greek architecture was based on mathematical proportions, the relationship between the width and the height of a column, the width and the height of the temple front was based on harmonious proportions.
All things are numbered

According to Tom Turner, “Neoplatonic ideas lie behind the Islamic and Christian square design of the Middle Ages and the mathematically calculated “Cartesian” gardens of the Renaissance. Descartes did not write either on aesthetic or gardening but his use of the geometrical method (i.e. deduction) in reasoning led philosophers and artists to seek self-evident axioms on which to base design. The axiom that art should imitate nature fitted perfectly with a Cartesian approach. Nature was understood, once again, as the essential and universal forms which shape the visual world.” Characteristic for the early Christian, Islamic, and Buddhist, gardens was the cross form, the symmetric centered axis, with four equal arms, one for each corner of the world, the simplest possible symbol; one horizontal and one vertical line bringing order into a chaotic world.

A fabulous restoration of a renaissance castle garden at the Chateau de Villandry, France.
The park as a spiritual garden

The British garden architect Tom Turner explains how the garden has developed into three classes of primary gardens: “For the body, for activity for the spirit”.

In the Koran, Allah “Seated himself upon his throne, and imposed laws on the sun and moon”\[^{ii}\].

In the Bible, the creation of the garden happened when God breathed life into the dust. “And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul. And the Lord planted a garden eastward in Eden: and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground made the lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four headwaters.”\[^{iii}\] The river in Eden was parted into the four rivers: Pishon, Gihon, Tigris, and Euphrates.

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The park as a spiritual garden

For all those who do good deeds there is an afterlife in Eden. In the Koran, heaven itself is commonly described in verse 35 of Surah Al-Ra’d where it says: “The parable of the Garden which the righteous are promised! Beneath it flow rivers. Perpetual the fruits thereof and the shade therein. Such is the End of the Righteous; and the end of the unbelievers is the Fire.” In the Koran, Sura 55 (verse 46 - 62) mentioned two sets of two gardens; that sounds as a garden divided into four. A famous feature of many Islamic gardens, though not all of them, is a lay-out called ‘Chahar Bagh.’ An ideal Chahar Bagh contains four channels of water flowing out from a fountain in the centre to channels round edge of the garden. The garden is divided into four parts linked by bridges over the water channels.
The origin of the serpentine and the curved line

The return of the Greek and Roman landscape started in England with The Moor Park in Surrey owned by Sir William Temple in 1680 when he incorporated a serpentine line in his park. It was a countermove against the axial symmetrical and geometrical gardens of the Renaissance and the Baroque period. Tempel’s inspiration came from the other side of the world. He stated: “What I have said of the best forms of gardens, it meant only of such as are in some sort regular; for there may be other forms wholly irregular, that may, for ought I know, have more beauty than any of the others…something of this I have seen in places, but heard more of it from others, who have lived much among the Chinese; a people, whose way of thinking seems to lie as wide of ours in Europe, as their country does.”
The origin of the serpentine and the curved line

According to Tom Turner the design of the park at Castle Howard was the beginning of the romantic English garden in Europe. It was designed between 1699 and 1712 by Christopher Hussy. “Henderskelf Lane” is a serpentine path along the serpentine formed lake that links Castle Howard to the temple of four winds in Yorkshire. It was a neoclassical landscape that led to a temple, a mausoleum, statuary, an obelisk, a Roman bridge, a pyramid and a road with triumphal arches. One of the things that characterized the romantic English garden and park was that the garden axis becomes independent of the house axis, the irregular groves and the curved line or the serpentine line. As with Charles Bridgeman’s design for joining up a series of small ponds in Hyde Park, London, to form a large park now known as “The Serpentine” created in 1730.
The park as a polycentric landscape.

But the biggest and most fundamental shift with the Romantic gardens came when the French philosopher Jack Derrida, who worked together with the architect Bernard Tschumi on the Parc de la Villette (1892). Here Derrida encouraged Tschumi to fix form before function as an anti modernist manifest. Tschumi based his design on three geometries: of points, lines and curves. The points become the folies or red steel pavilions, the lines were the French avenues, and the curve was the cinematic promenade. It was a combination of inspiration from the Russian constructivists and the first landscape design based on deconstructionist philosophy.
The park as a polycentric landscape.

The place was open for any alternative reading and use. The red folies were for everyone and for no one, a park for the people with no hierarchy - just a multiplicity of possibilities, like the internet a world of many centers, a polycentric landscape.
The park as a representation of heaven..... and hell?

Hell is also a part of our cultural background and shares many similarities with heaven in the different religions and myths.
Reflection, is it overload?

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