Where Pine and Palm Meet: The California Garden as a Regional Expression

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Abstract

The gardens of California are important manifestations of regionalism. They have epitomized the desire of Californians to practice hedonistic and experimental attitudes, and to venerate contact with Nature and the local past as an alternative to life in an industrialized society. This paper analyzes this phenomenon by examining the work of professional designers in a simple evolutionary model of four progressive culture-determined stages. Initially, colonists attempted to adapt the landscape to familiar models. Entry into a national industrialized culture provided access to the most advanced design theory, technology, and new plant material. Recognition of regional character was achieved by attempting to re-capture the local past, the appropriation of analogous design traditions, or by reference to local ecologies. Major economic shifts resulted in the discovery of new uses in the garden. This model suggests that regional character is not a constant designed expression, but evolves in response to changes in society. Gardens from each of the four stages co-exist, reflecting a plurality of values.

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