

## THE VERGE

### PLOT

*The word 'paradise' is derived from the ancient Persian – 'a green place'.<sup>1</sup>*

Gardens are expressions of our longing for paradise, romantic and nostalgic glimpses of perfect and wild innocence - scraps of order created from a chaotic world. Our childhood impressions of the garden – moments of wonder at the discovery and plenitude of new worlds – are memories which can be felt, touched and tasted in the gardens of the present. The garden oasis is a soothing place for reverie and reflection, where the mind turns inwards upon itself and we feel momentarily at one with the elements.

The metaphoric associations of the Western garden define it as a space distinct from what surrounds it in place and time. 'History' happens in cities and towns, and in the garden we can escape the politics of progress and retreat from the busy, municipal world of affairs into the healing solace of the 'natural world'.

The myth of an earthly paradise or a lost perfect harmony is central to Western landscape design in which gardens were seen as enclosures with firmly delineated boundaries. The Medieval view of the garden as a meditative, symbolic enclosure was reversed in the Renaissance when the design of private garden estates became more closely associated with architecture, painting and sculpture. Public urban landscapes were established late in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the form of cemeteries, parks and botanical gardens.

*Botanic gardens may be considered the last expression of a formal philosophical basis to landscape architecture, influenced as it was by the developments in scientific philosophy and botanical expeditions to the New World.<sup>2</sup>*

The Botanic Garden opened in the wealthy seaside suburb of St Kilda in 1861 and became a popular place for recreation. Traces of the original landscape design which included a fountain, space for promenading and a carriage drive with formal central avenues and pavilion for bands surrounded by circular walkways and beds are still evident today.

The gardens also served an educational purpose, exhibiting plant specimens and propagating exotic (and later, native) plant species. Plants were sourced from the Royal Botanic Gardens and Herbarium in Melbourne and through local donations. An aesthetic expression of cultural memory; the Botanic Gardens stand today as an eloquent souvenir of the people who first made it.

### NOISE

The temporary transposition of art objects out of the museum and into a garden setting makes evident the relativity of structure and order. As if to deny the boundary between the art world and the everyday world, the wonderful and terrible sameness of the white cube gives way to another coded, yet more joyful space; the garden. This 'interruption' harbours a carnivalesque celebration of change. The introduced whimsy of individual voices delights, amuses, and provokes. Parody, inversion, appropriation and mimicry render absent or precious the atavistic relation between artificial and natural codes.

