

The Roof Garden Commission. Dan Graham

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A Conversation with Dan Graham

Sheena Wagstaff

During the course of the past fifty years, Dan Graham has assumed many roles. As director of John Daniels Gallery, in 1965, he gave Sol LeWitt his first exhibition. When the space closed shortly thereafter, Graham became a penetrating and engaging commentator on the pages of art journals through photo-essays such as his famous “Homes for America” (1966–67).¹ His many texts over the years have elaborated on a vast range of topics—from rock music to architecture, from Minimalist sculpture to science fiction. In the 1970s, before Graham began to build glass-and-steel pavilions, he was also deeply engaged in making performance and video-based work that often evoked the gritty, confessional, and confrontational style popularized by the musicians he has favored, including the Velvet Underground, the Kinks, Patti Smith, and, more recently, Sonic Youth.²

The artist is an erudite and voracious bibliophile. On the curators’ first visit to his downtown studio to discuss the possibility of a Roof Garden commission, the conversation soon led to architectural history, beginning with Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (1886–1969), whom Graham describes as a major influence. He then pulled from his extensive library books with images of buildings as fantastic and disparate as the Handelsblad Cineac (Amsterdam, 1934) by Jan Duiker (1890–1935), the George Washington Bridge Bus Station (New York, 1963) by Pier Luigi Nervi (1891–1979), and the Museum of Fruit (Yamanashi, Japan, 1996) by Itsuko Hasegawa (b. 1941). In parallel, the history of landscape architecture and gardens has long been another preoccupation, and, in the following interview with Graham, conducted at the Met on January 22, 2014, Sheena Wagstaff begins there.

Sheena Wagstaff I’d like to start off with the idea of a pavilion, notwithstanding the fact that what you’ve conceived for the Met is not a pavilion per se, in the sense that it has no roof, but is rather architectural sculpture that sits in a landscape—

Dan Graham Well, it is a hybrid, like all my work.

SW Yes indeed. You have written extensively and very beautifully about landscape in the catalogue for “Theatergarten Bestiarium,” which was an exhibition at PSI Contemporary Art Center back in 1989—³

DG Yes. That was one of the venues. Actually, it originally began as an idea for Le Confort Moderne, a space in the French city of Poitiers. It was Rüdiger Schöttle who conceived the Bestiarium idea. He was my Munich dealer and the one who actually introduced me to landscape architecture. I also got very involved in landscape architecture because, I think, Robert Smithson turned me on to Frederick Law Olmsted. He famously wrote about Olmsted in the 1970s.⁴ The most important art spaces in France during the Socialist period were historical gardens. And I did a couple landscape pieces in Brittany early on, in the eighties, like my work in Clisson [*Two-Way Mirror Pergola Bridge*, 1990, fig. 18, p. 46], which has recently been reinstalled. The thesis of my article “Garden as Theater as Museum,” published in the Bestiarium catalogue, was that the first museums were actually Renaissance gardens.

SW I was going to ask you about that. Would you position this new pavilion in that tradition, rather like a vernacular play on the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century idea of garden pavilions in the aristocracy’s big estates? You’ve written at length about the historical trajectory of the garden as a memory theater—bringing together an association between memory and symbolic images, from Renaissance gardens onward.

DG Well, I think the first gardens in the Renaissance were actually theme parks, in a strange way, because they had water features. Like English gardens, they’re allegories for philosophical and poetic ideas, and they’re archaeological digs. In the 1980s, when I was first making pavilions, France was really advanced because they wanted to regionalize art. All the French FRAC [Fonds régionaux d’art contemporain] art spaces were historical gardens with historical overlays. At that time, the French artist Daniel Buren was talking about the museum as a fixed, Cartesian entity. I wanted instead to show that every ten years, the museum changes.

SW Ah—and thus to architecture?

DG Yes, I’d always had an interest in architecture, in architects such as Mies van der Rohe and his Barcelona

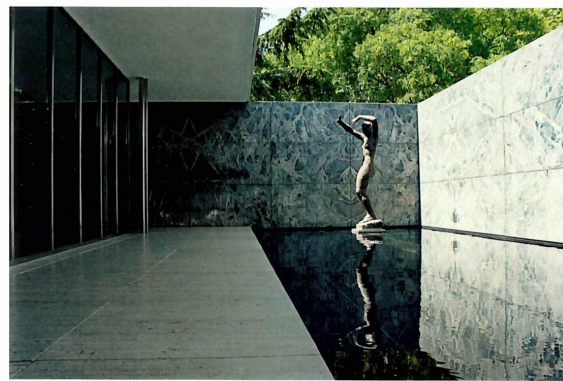


Fig. 6. Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (1886–1969). German Pavilion for the Barcelona International Exposition, 1929



Fig. 7. **Jacques Rigaud** (1681–1754). *View of the Queen's Theatre from the Rotunda at Stowe, Buckinghamshire, ca. 1739*. Ink and wash, 11 $\frac{5}{8}$ x 19 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (29.5 x 49.5 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1942 (42.79(7))

Pavilion [1929, fig. 6]. What I liked about the pavilion was that it was planned to be temporary.⁵ At the time, I was also thinking about bus shelters and telephone booths as temporary pavilions. Then I discovered that the Barcelona Pavilion was actually landscaped: it was a landscape pavilion. In my thinking, I related it to Stowe House [figs. 7 and 8], the English stately home with its eighteenth-century gardens, designed by the great landscapers James Gibbs, William Kent, and Capability Brown.

SW You see the Barcelona Pavilion as relating to Stowe?

DG I think English gardens were a very big influence and I think Mies liked Stowe, because there's a narrative that unfolds as you walk around it. As you walk around the Barcelona Pavilion, a similar type of narrative evolves: you can see the hedges that grow on its side reflected on the glass—glass which also reflects you and your gaze—and all of this is in relationship to the water of the reflecting pool. But, I think, in some ways, Mies also took a lot from Karl Friedrich Schinkel, whose houses from the early nineteenth century were specially landscaped by the architect. I see Mies's building as an allegory of the Weimar Republic.

SW So, from Stowe via Schinkel to Mies. . . . You've also commented that from the Renaissance, the idea of the



Fig. 8. **Jacques Rigaud** (1681–1754). *View from the Portico of the House to the Park at Stowe, Buckinghamshire, ca. 1739*. Ink and wash, sheet: 14 $\frac{11}{16}$ x 21 $\frac{1}{16}$ in. (37.3 x 53.5 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1942 (42.79(5))

Baroque garden was then taken up in a much more formal way—both in an English idiom and then laterally from a French point of view—as a sort of vast, “natural” theater, one that had its architectural boundaries defined by boxed hedges, grass, stone, and fountains. If you apply what you’ve been talking about in terms of the Miesian idea behind a contemporary pavilion—the landscaped temporary pavilion—this is not so far away from what you’re proposing for the Roof Garden commission at the Met!

DG The idea of a temporary pavilion using hedges is something I’ve been thinking about for a while. One of the first I did was for the International Garden Exhibition [Internationale Gartenbauausstellung, 1993] in Stuttgart. Every ten years, a German city is selected to be the site for this international exhibition. Many of the parks in the center of the cities are redesigned by young architects, and they have a show, which includes garden seeds, flowers, and garden implements—this is for suburbanites to buy gardening material. It is also meant to revive dying cities. In Stuttgart, some four years before the show took place, they asked me to design temporary meeting places, and one of my additional proposals was the *Two-Way Mirror Hedge Labyrinth* [p. 52], which was not realized there. I made it instead for a collector in La Jolla, California, named Bob Orton, in 1991. While Orton’s version doesn’t exist anymore (he died and the house was sold), a variation is now

installed at the Walker Art Center [*Two-Way Mirror Punched Steel Hedge Labyrinth*, 1996, p. 53].

SW But your interest and involvement with landscape architecture long preceded that moment, didn't it?

DG I have to admit, it may indeed have been Smithson who got me interested in Olmsted. But my real deep interest in landscape was spurred subsequently by Rüdiger Schöttle.

SW Right. You mentioned this.

DG And I was also getting a lot of commissions in France; they were all sites in historical gardens. So I did a lot of research and traveled to places like Stowe. What I like about the hedge is that it's both from the Baroque period *and* the period of eighteenth-century English gardens. It also happens to be what defines the edges of suburban property—it marks the property line between houses.

SW What you're doing is conflating the Baroque and its great private mansions with grand landscape vistas with the idea of a petit-bourgeois private home. I wanted to ask you about this more because—from the tradition of landscape architecture and, of course, the history of suburban developments—there is such symbolism in the garden hedge. In both contexts, they carry different political messages and are freighted with different cultural and class references. Could you describe how both of those concerns are intermixed within the trajectory of your work—and whether it is possible or indeed essential to make a distinction between the two?

DG Well, there's one other thing that's very interesting. People began moving to suburbia during a period when the city was unhygienic, after the Industrial Revolution. People moved to the suburbs, but this is originally where things such as burial grounds were located, so you have an arcadia on top of a cemetery. Indeed, cemeteries may have been the first suburban gardens.

SW This is so multilayered, Dan, and I'm not quite sure which aspect of this to discuss next...

DG Well, I'm a product of suburbia. I grew up in New Jersey [fig. 9].

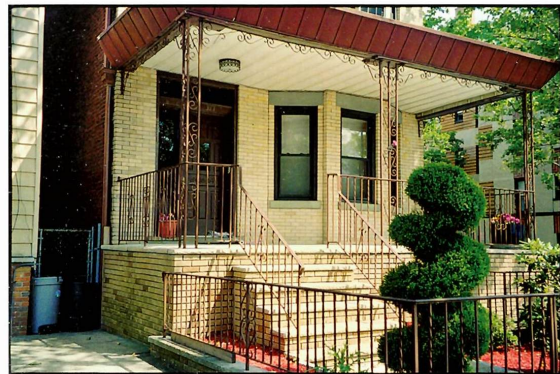


Fig. 9. Dan Graham, *Untitled (Union City, NJ)*, 2006. Chromogenic print. Courtesy of the artist and Regen Projects, Los Angeles

SW Right. And, of course, suburbia was also formed as a response to the need for a better environment in the city by taking parts of the city populace and displacing them—but they were also the working class.

DG Well, this goes back to Haussmann.⁶ Haussmann tried to get rid of the working-class population in Paris [fig. 10]—they should be relocated to the suburbs, because they're potentially revolutionary, right?

SW Sure.

DG That's the political aspect.

SW Indeed. Ironically, from a contemporary standpoint, the suburbs are now often considered a more congenial, semirural environment in which to lead a healthier life than an inner-city setting. So is what you're doing on the roof of the Met, bringing together this idea of suburbia as we've inherited it, but in conjunction with the significance of where the Met sits in relation to the city?

DG I'm also relating the whole project to your rather banal hedges that line the space up there.

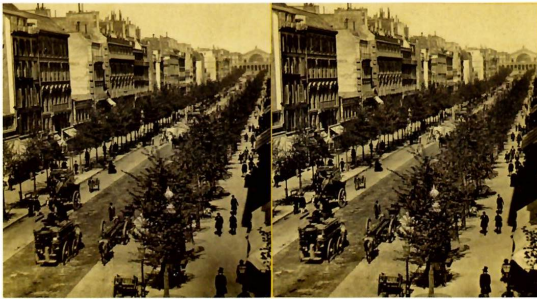


Fig. 10. *Instantaneous Paris: Boulevard de Strasbourg*, ca. 1860s–70s. Stereoscopic print. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Gift of Weston J. Naef, in memory of Kathleen W. Naef and Weston J. Naef Sr., 1982 (1982.1182.3097)

SW Right.

DG I understand they're a kind of evergreen.

SW They are. [*They laugh.*] May I go back to what you were saying about Smithson and his interest in Olmsted?

DG Well, I think Smithson was from an English, Catholic background, and I think he was kind of taken with the late nineteenth century. And Olmsted came out of the Picturesque tradition, and, in Central Park, he was building into what used to be a relatively undeveloped city landscape.

SW According to one recent interpretation, Olmsted's positioning of Central Park was due partly to an economic argument. He apparently persuaded the city planners and local politicians that it was useful for wealthy people to have their homes surrounding the park, because it would raise the value of the properties and therefore increase tax revenue for the city. So, as the Olmsted-designed Central Park stands—with the Metropolitan Museum being the only building to have been sanctioned a place within the perimeter of Central Park—do you feel that it relates back to the contentions you're making for a much more historical, symbolic function of the park? Or do you think that that's been superseded now?

DG In the video I did for Dia [1991], I talk about what happened in New York in the seventies and eighties.⁷ The



Fig. 11. **Dan Graham** inside his *Triangular Structure with Two-Way Mirror Sliding Door* for *The New Urban Landscape* (1988), World Financial Center, New York, 1988

city had no money for parks. So, park designs were actually done by corporations. They began before that as corporate atriums, corporate buildings with a kind of arcadian suburban landscape inside, like the World Financial Center [fig. 11] at Battery Park City. In the park there they used the paving material that you have in city parks, and it's artificially landscaped. There's always an aspect of generating money



Fig. 12. **Kevin Roche** (b. 1922). Ford Foundation Building, New York, 1968, interior atrium

from corporations by designing park amenities for visitors. Corporate architecture is very important in my work. Two-way mirrored glass now defines the center of the city, where so many of the buildings are clad in this kind of reflective surface. And then the hedge defines the edge of the city.

There's also a very important book I read by Michel Butor called *Passing Time* [*L'emploi du temps*, 1956]. It's about being lost in a northern English city, probably Manchester, and the city is like a labyrinth—it's an old metaphor. But, of course, my labyrinth hedges go all the way back to historical gardens. I wanted to bring in the history. Most art is about the present time and contemporary ideas, but

I wanted to bring in historical overlays. And I'm also contrasting the edge of the city with the center of the city.

SW Perfectly put. Your point is also particularly relevant to the Met's revivification of contemporary art through the lens of history—it's a phrase that's more often quoted the other way around! To your point about corporate architecture and atriums, it's worth mentioning that Kevin Roche was a pioneer in his building for the Ford Foundation [New York, 1968, fig. 12], by creating an interior atrium, filled with ecological, green plantings.

DG Yes, originally that building's atrium was open to people in the neighborhood, who could use it as a park, but that changed in the late eighties. It's now a picnic area—or rather a lunch-sandwich-eating area—for people who work there. Of course, a lot of my works are actually sponsored by corporations, and they're situated in park-type areas, just outside corporate buildings, where people in the neighborhood gather to talk or take their lunch [see fig. 17]. I usually provide benches because older people are there; if they're grandparents, they might be there with their grandchildren. So park design has an awful lot to do with the changing city.

SW Kevin Roche is also the architect responsible for many of the interior and gallery spaces of the Met as it currently stands.

DG Well, I think Roche's major work is actually the Central Park Zoo [1988]. I probably shouldn't mention this, but I think he became a little bit overinvolved in monumental structures. But on the other hand, on the edge of the Roof Garden, one can see an example of his use of two-way mirrored glass in the Met's building. And Central Park Zoo is not that far away.

SW Indeed. Could we go back to Smithsonian? You come from a certain generation, like Smithsonian and Gordon Matta-Clark or even Siah Armajani. And then, of course, there's also another group of artists such as Richard Serra and Carl Andre, all of whom you are close to in age. You have many historical ties and formal connections with your peers. I was thinking about how, in the last thirty-odd years, all of these people have become known for varying interpretations of sculptural form and void in relation to architectural space and scale. How do you see yourself in relation to that generation of artists? Do you see yourself as part of a certain artistic longitude?



Fig. 13. **Thomas Cole** (1801–1848). *View from Mount Holyoke, Northampton, Massachusetts, after a Thunderstorm—The Oxbow*, 1836. Oil on canvas, 51 1/2 × 76 in. (130.8 × 193 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Gift of Mrs. Russell Sage, 1908 (08.228)

DG The trajectory for me begins with the person who's my earliest supporter, Dan Flavin. Flavin and my favorite American artist, Ed Ruscha, both said their biggest influence was Albert Bierstadt, the Hudson River School painter, who was actually Swiss. But I've decided my favorite Hudson River School painter was a teacher of Frederic Church: an English bloke named Cole, Thomas Cole [fig. 13].

Cole, by the way, was very close to the English painter John Martin, whom I feel close to at the moment. Somehow, I got more interested in these artists with a historical background, like Flavin, who's a Minimalist artist, but who cites Bierstadt as his inspiration.

SW Interestingly, Flavin collected drawings and watercolors by these Hudson River School artists. He would buy them in very poor condition, often with foxing or torn edges. But his interest in them was how they conveyed light through line and color. He actually annotated the mats of many of them with notes about light and color, which, in view of his work, makes absolute sense.

DG Well, he lived in Cold Spring Harbor.

SW Yes. But why are you so interested in John Martin, he of the great triptych painting of the Apocalypse for which

he's probably best known?⁸ In terms of popular culture, I guess it's not that far away from images by sci-fi artists.

DG Well, to be exact, I think he was the first science-fiction-cover artist. But I discovered in reading about him that he was a very big influence on cinema. He began by painting on glass. It seems that all these inventions of protocinema actually began in England, not France. John Martin was part of that group. Perhaps the reason the English don't like him is because he was creating Cecil B. DeMille-type Hollywood situations. In fact, he was loved by Cecil B. DeMille.

Actually, this was the source of a very big disagreement I once had with the curator Sir Norman Rosenthal. He said he hates Martin because it leads to Cecil B. DeMille. It's interesting to think about the cinema with regard to city architecture, though. I find a lot of architecture is involved with the idea of cinema.⁹

SW Martin's great Apocalypse paintings were designed as a kind of panoramic environment to encircle the viewer, to thrill the ordinary citizen by a vicarious experience of a catastrophically different world—but also to warn them. In a way this brings us back to the Bestiarium and your notion about the garden and its landscape as that of theater. I suppose cinema is not so distant from this idea, but with different elements.

DG Well, there's a piece of mine that relates to this—one that you might not know about. It's called *Double Exposure* [2003, p. 55]. I proposed it initially for Catherine David's documenta 10 [1997], but it was turned down. It's now situated in the garden of the Serralves Foundation in Portugal. It's a triangular pavilion of two-way mirrored glass that you can enter. The third side is actually a Cibachrome transparency—a printed photograph of the landscape that appears fifty meters in front of the sculpture. During the day, there's a superimposition of present time passing, in terms of light and nature, and the past, in the form of the photograph. And while the landscape goes through different seasons, the photograph stays the same.

SW I've seen it several times. It's very painterly, as well as cinematic.

DG Yes. I know I come out of the time of Minimalist artists who are generally against painting. But I was a big

supporter, from the very beginning, of Minimalist painters like Jo Baer. And the person who discovered my work—or rather my earliest magazine-page pieces—was Robert Mangold.¹⁰

SW Really?

DG Mangold loved the early magazine-page pieces. And I think his work has a suburban aspect.

SW That surprises me. It's rather revelatory.

DG He was Sol LeWitt's best friend, and so I became close friends with both of them. Mangold is still doing great painting, by the way. He's in his late seventies, but he's doing great, great work. So very gradually, I started moving away from my beginning in Minimalist art and getting interested in painting. I think Jo pushed me a little bit in that direction.

SW That's fascinating.

DG This is beside the fact that I can't paint. So from a professional art point of view, there are only a few things I can do.

SW In that case, may I move back to architecture? We touched on some aspects of historical architecture, but one of your avowed touch points—and you may feel differently about this now—was Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown.¹¹ I understood they were talismans of sorts for you, not just for their approach to architecture, but also for their association with Pop. Could you describe the significance of their practice for you?

DG Well, I know Robert Venturi loved Ed Ruscha and Claes Oldenburg. I think the main thing about Venturi was that his work, in a certain way, redefined its relationship to the city in terms of highway culture. This is something that ties him back to Ruscha.¹² Of course, I'm from New Jersey. New Jersey and the Los Angeles area of California are basically the sources of highway culture.

SW But Venturi's engagement with that kind of culture, that quotidian culture, was actually a very ambivalent one; not a championing at all but sometimes parodic, was it not?



Fig. 14. Jeff Koons (b.1955). *Kiepenkerl*, 1987. Stainless steel, 71 × 26 × 37 in. (180.3 × 66 × 94 cm). Installation view, Sculpture Project Münster, Germany, 1987

DG No, I think it's class-based. I think he's interested in upper-lower-class vernacular, and he's Italian American. And for me, what was very interesting was that outside of upper-lower-class houses there's always a symbolic ornament placed in front of the house. If they're Italian Americans, it's a Madonna. And if they're German Americans, it's often a gnome. Jeff Koons, for example, who grew up in upper-lower-class Pennsylvania, always talks about that reflective ball that's put on the front of the lawn. And in the backyard of upper-lower-class houses, there's often a plastic swimming pool.

In Münster, what Jeff Koons did was take his memory of upper-lower-class Pennsylvania and combine it with high rococo [fig. 14]. In other words, he's German American, and he's using high rococo. So to me, in this context, the art historian T. J. Clark is key. Tim Clark and I agree that the revolutionary class is the petit bourgeois. That is, upper-lower-class people who become lower-middle-class. See, my piece "Homes for America" [1966–67] was not just an attack on Minimalist art or a sociological critique of suburbia and the petit bourgeois.¹³ In fact, I see suburbia more the way the nineteenth-century French writer Gustave Flaubert did. It's a kind of ambivalent arcadia.



Fig. 15. **Dan Graham.** *Two Different Anamorphic Surfaces*, 2000. Two-way mirror glass and stainless steel, 216 1/2 × 165 3/8 × 94 1/2 in. (550 × 420.1 × 240 cm). Wanås Foundation, Knislinge, Sweden

Venturi's design of the suburban vernacular is a celebration of Italian American culture. I'm Jewish, but I always thought Italians were much more interesting. [*Wagstaff laughs.*] And, of course, there's a similar ambivalence in my using something like a suburban hedge, because suburbs, in a way, are also prisons; you guard yourself against intrusions from the neighbors.

SW Well, every man has his castle, in a way. The growth of the suburbs coincides with the eventual ability of working-class people to own their own houses—something that was not possible for a very long time.

DG Oh, yes. The other thing about hedges that interests me, in relation to two-way mirrored glass, is that, from a distance, hedges are opaque; when you get in close, they're transparent. Two-way mirrored glass, on the other hand, is both reflective and transparent [see fig. 15], and it keeps changing as the light changes. In a way, the whole structure operates in relationship to the function of light. This piece for the Roof Garden, like many of mine, is something you walk through. In short, I don't want work that's static in the way that Minimalist art was static. I want work that changes as you walk through it.

I also like having a play between the Renaissance and the Baroque. In my piece for the Dia Foundation roof at their former space on West Twenty-Second Street, the outside cube could be seen to represent a rectilinear Renaissance perspective, whereas the interior cylinder was Baroque in form; and it all changed as the clouds changed and as you walked around it.¹⁴ I relate it to people's bodies as they change, as you see yourself. This Met piece, with its S curve, has anamorphic aspects. When you're on the side that's convex, if you're a boy, you see yourself as Superman. On the other side, facing you, women can see themselves as thin. [*Graham grins, Wagstaff laughs.*]

In a way, there's an aspect of the fun house. But I really think the original gardens as we know them from the Renaissance also had a fun-house aspect.

SW I am interested in the unfashionable idea of humor in art. You mentioned Ruscha and Oldenburg—and I think maybe of Roy Lichtenstein, too, or even Jeff Koons. You know, they're all artists who have either talked or written about the importance of humor in art. And the playhouse/fun-house aspect of this work brings that to light, I think.

DG Well, let's face it, the competitor for modern art is Disneyland.

SW I suppose one could then say, similarly, that the competitor of modern architecture is something like the Disney-built town of Celebration in Florida. It has an equivalent in Britain in the seductively named Poundbury, a town built on Prince Charles's land in Dorset, based on the utopian idea of the "garden city" in the early 1900s.¹⁵ Like Prince Charles, to whom modern architecture is anathema, his architect Léon Krier is equally reactionary. Poundbury is like a stage set for a 1950s TV sitcom, using an extraordinary mishmash of architectural clichés. It's been criticized for being a Disneyfication of British suburban country living.

DG Well, in terms of other country houses, Robert Venturi's real hero is the architect Edwin Lutyens. He loved Lutyens.

SW Does it all really go back to Britain?

DG Yes. Well, he's an Anglophile, Venturi. And, of course, his wife, who's South African, is the epitome of British sociological discourse.

SW To extend our pop culture analogy for a moment, someone whose artwork I saw recently is Kim Gordon. When I first met you, many, many years ago in the early 1980s, it was during the time when you were very involved with a number of musicians here in New York. I remember trying to talk with you at the Mudd Club, when Sonic Youth was performing. Of course this was impossible; no one could talk, or hear, when Sonic Youth was playing! You've been so interested in music in the past—in the Kinks, in Patti Smith, and Kim continues to be a good friend. Is music something that you still keep up with? Do you go to gigs anymore?

DG Not so many, but I'm rediscovering the importance of Nancy Sinatra in my record collection. I'm going through my old records.

SW Aha! "These Boots Are Made for Walkin'."

DG Well, the album *Boots* [1966] is worth listening to. My studio assistant is a feminist with a sense of humor, and I think she fell in love with "These Boots Are Made for



Fig. 16. **Dan Graham.** Still of Patti Smith from *Rock My Religion*, 1982–84. Video, 55 min., 27 sec. Courtesy Electronic Arts Intermix, New York

Walkin'" immediately. There's also another very good album that Nancy Sinatra made, *Nancy in London* [1966], in which she covers all kinds of British classics.

SW Oh, I've got to look for it. So Nancy Sinatra—and now also Sandie Shaw and Petula Clark: all these big names from the 1960s have recently been reemerging out of the past. Why do you think there's a revival of interest in that period?

DG I think it's Nancy's persona as a woman who doesn't put up with shit.

SW And she's around and still making music.

DG Yes.

SW Do you know Patti Smith, who figures so prominently in your film *Rock My Religion* [1982–84, fig. 16]?

DG Do I know her? I know that we're both from New Jersey.

SW [She laughs.] Right.

DG Yes! Well, I think it's important to add at this point that I've always loved to do collaborations. When we first discussed this project, I thought of working with the landscape architect Günther Vogt. We were both previously involved on a project for the drug company Novartis. It has a park on its corporate campus in



Fig. 17. Novartis Associates in front of **Dan Graham's** *One Straight Line Crossed by One Curved Line* (2009), Novartis AG, Basel, 2009

Basel, which he designed and in which I have a work [*One Straight Line Crossed by One Curved Line*, 2009, fig. 17]. I thought Günther would appreciate the kind of banal relationship between the hedges of your Roof Garden's boundary wall and the treetops of Central Park. I wanted to bring that relationship in.

SW One of his initial suggestions was to incorporate sprinklers, the kind of archetypal image of the suburban lawn, redolent of David Lynch, which holds many dark secrets. Is Lynch part of your pantheon of filmmakers who are important to you?

DG I've only seen a few of his films.

SW Well, Günther originally proposed having actual, working sprinklers on the roof. As an addition to your thinking about the landscaped pavilion, is this something that you find takes the artificiality—the artificial-natural setting of the suburban lawn—one step too far?

DG I'm not sure whether I would've come up with that idea—although the use of Astroturf was my suggestion. So the idea of integrating the artificial-natural product into a natural use of greenery was partly my idea; he's just taken it one step further.



Fig. 18. Wedding couple in front of **Dan Graham's** *Two-Way Mirror Pergola Bridge* (1990), FRAC des Pays de la Loire, Clisson, France, ca. 1990

SW I think it's a great idea.

DG The ivy hedges are another artifice—they will already be fully grown. Sometimes when I do hedge pieces, the problem is that I want to use evergreens, which take a long time to grow—boxwood, for example, which I like. So for museum installations, it doesn't make sense to use this kind of plant. I did use it, though, for the Walker's version of *Two-Way Mirror Punched Steel Hedge Labyrinth* [1996, p. 53]. They're actually trees.

SW But that's a permanent installation that has been in the Walker's gardens for a long time and has the time to grow.

DG Yes.

SW This is the first time you've really collaborated on a work from the beginning with someone like a landscape architect. Is that right?

DG Correct.

SW Apart from his landscaping expertise, what else has Günther brought to this collaboration? How have you benefited from it?

DG Oh, very interestingly. My original idea was just to have a simple squarelike form, where two sides would be hedge and the divider would be this S curve. And Günther suggested a more elongated rectangle. I think he did this to make it in relationship to the dimensions of the roof. As you walk around the roof, it is part of the experience. At first, I liked a more square structure, but I think he convinced me that the long rectangle relates very much to the proportions up there.

SW Given what you said about your first plan for the pavilion—that, in a way, it is a reiteration, in so many meanings of that word—I wanted to ask you about its site specificity here. It's something that you've used before, a shape that you're adapting.

DG Well, isn't that how artists normally work? [*He laughs.*]

SW Do you think it's site-specific enough not to be relevant to another site?

DG When we first spoke, you suggested that the work relate to Central Park—you can see Central Park from the site as well as the tops of nearby apartment buildings with their own gardens—and you also mentioned that the work had to take into account of the existing hedge fence there and that it couldn't be altered. So the work was formed in relationship to those existing situations.

SW Fair enough. I wanted to ask you another question. Do you think that the notion of a public park has lost its meaning? Or has it just changed?

DG I think the public park now is always in relationship to urban corporate architecture. I think—as Kevin Roche's atrium garden for the Ford Foundation used to be—it brings the corporation into a different relationship with its workers and with the people who take their lunches there or live in the neighborhood.

SW Well, if you take what is now called by some architectural historians the "atrium complex," and you think about the development or enlargement of museums since the 1960s, in which a huge overscaled atrium is central, the whole issue has become problematic, but also revealing.

DG Hm.

SW The last thing I wanted to ask you relates to the idea of interviews. Throughout your career, you've been incredibly articulate in your writing for many publications and in numerous interviews about your own work, but also perceptive in your commentary in relation to other artists' work. An interview has always been a vehicle for a certain amount of self-reflection for artists such as yourself, who come from a generation when there was arguably more critique and perception of how museums operate and how different social classes and audiences interact with museums than is currently the case. Do you feel that the interview form itself is something that should be more than simply information sharing? Could it continue to have that sort of self-reflexive bite to it that makes an interview something different from other literary forms?

DG Well, I think one thing that happens in interviews—and it hasn't in this interview, but often with my interviews—is that I trash other artists and institutions.

SW Well, feel free. [*Graham laughs.*] Is that because you're being well behaved?

DG No, it's because perhaps I'm distracted by the roof of the Metropolitan Museum as being a leftover space, and I think leftover spaces that are a little bit awkward, in a way, are a challenge to me.

SW Leftover spaces are also, very often, the most successful spaces of any museum, because they are so difficult to program—and thus control. I've found that artists like leftover spaces, perhaps because they're laden and redolent with issues that have to do with an institutional framework—even the ideological framework of the museum itself. They also pose a huge challenge, for example, to an architect who is hired to work with a museum: it's impossible to consciously create leftover spaces!

So I love the fact that you're doing this project for the Met in that leftover space up on the roof, and it's inspiring that you find it difficult.

Dan, would you like to add anything else?

DG Well—no.

Notes

1. Published in *Arts Magazine* 41, no. 3 (December 1966/January 1967), pp. 21–22.
2. Patti Smith is a main subject of Graham's most well-known video, *Rock My Religion* (1982–84), an hour-long history that traces rock music's origins from the Shakers through the disaffected suburban youth of the 1950s and beyond.
3. Dan Graham, "Garden as Theater as Museum," in *The Theatergarden Bestiary: The Garden as Theater as Museum*, ed. Chris Dercon, exh. cat. (Long Island City, N.Y.: Institute for Contemporary Arts/PSI Museum; Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1990), pp. 86–105.
4. See Robert Smithson, "Frederick Law Olmsted and the Dialectical Landscape," *Artforum* (February 1973), pp. 117–28.
5. The pavilion was demolished in 1930 and reconstructed in 1986.
6. Georges-Eugène Haussmann (1809–1891) was prefect of the Seine department encompassing Paris and its immediate suburbs under Napoleon III.
7. Graham refers to the video "catalogue" *Two-Way Mirror*, produced for the exhibition *Rooftop Urban Park Project*, Dia Center for the Arts, New York, 1991.
8. Martin's triptych includes *The Great Day of His Wrath* (1851–53), Tate, London (N05613); *The Plains of Heaven* (1851–53), Tate, London (T01928); and *The Last Judgment* (1853), Tate, London (T01927).
9. See, for example, Dan Graham, "Theater, Cinema, Power," *Parachute*, no. 31 (Summer 1983), pp. 11–19; reprinted in Dan Graham, *Rock My Religion: Writings and Art Projects 1965–1990*, ed. Brian Wallis (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1993), pp. 170–89.
10. See Dan Graham, "My Works for Magazine Pages: A History of Conceptual Art," in *Two-Way Mirror Power: Selected Writings by Dan Graham on His Art*, ed. Alexander Alberro (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999), pp. 10–13.
11. The architectural partnership of Robert Venturi (b. 1925) and John Rauch (b. 1930) was formed in 1964; Denise Scott Brown (b. 1931) joined the firm after marrying Venturi in 1967.
12. See, for example, Ruscha's artist book *Every Building on the Sunset Strip* (1966).
13. Graham's photo-essay "Homes for America" (see note 1) is read by Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, for one, as a critique of Minimalist art in his "Conceptual Art 1962–1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions," *October* 55 (Winter 1990), pp. 105–43.
14. See discussion of *Two-Way Mirror Cylinder Inside Cube and a Video Salon: Rooftop Urban Park Project* (1991), on p. 16, in this volume.
15. On garden cities, see Jean-Louis Cohen, "The Idyll of the Garden City," in *The Future of Architecture, since 1889* (London: Phaidon, 2012).

Selected Pavilions