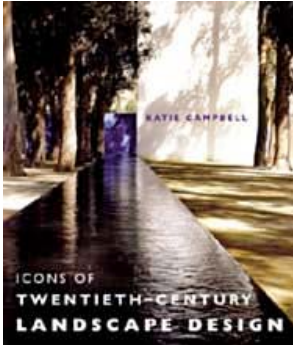




*Publisher of Historic Gardens Review*



**Icons of Twentieth-Century Landscape Design,  
by Katie Campbell.  
Frances Lincoln. 176 pages. £30. ISBN 0-7112-2533-8.**

Writing the text for a modern garden book must surely be a thankless task. However thoughtful, learned or elegant the text, to paraphrase Bill Clinton: "It's the pictures, stupid!" It becomes a coffee-table book, which nobody reads from cover to cover. At best they dip. But with *Icons of Twentieth-Century Landscape Design* dipping would be a pity. The text is thoughtful, learned and elegant.

Katie Campbell has taken 29 'landscapes' from Gaudí's Park Güell in Barcelona (1900-1914) to Libeskind's Jewish Museum in Berlin (1999) and produced a well-crafted essay to accompany, indeed embellish, the photographs. She examines the history, the concept, the design and the underlying philosophy of each landscape, relating them to their own period and to other landscapes.

Campbell's choice of sites is original, not to say eccentric. The book does, of course, round up the usual suspects: Guevrekian's Villa Noailles at Hyères, Steele's Naumkeag, Lloyd Wright's Falling Water and Hamilton Finlay's Little Sparta. But she makes iconic claims for some lesser-known places, such as Porcinai's Il Roseto in Florence and Brenda Colvin's landscape for Eggborough Power Station in Yorkshire. One may quarrel with some of her choices. She includes the Parc de la Villette, which is really no more than a deconstructivist theme park designed to bolster the delusion that all Parisians are intellectuals, but not the much simpler and more intelligent Parc Citroën across town. Surely neither Mies van der Rohe's Barcelona Pavilion nor Le Corbusier's Villa Savoie were or are landscapes in any sense of the term, while Smithson's Spiral Jetty is a seascape. And all Campbell's persuasive skill does not convince that Schwartz's Bagel Garden is anything more than a mild and not very funny joke. Some hard questions are, perhaps necessarily, ducked. Was Derek Jarman, whose Prospect Cottage in Kent is so well illustrated, really a garden icon or only a gay one? Will future generations see Little Sparta as a ground-breaking masterpiece or merely a piece of pseudo-intellectual kitsch? Juries are, as they say, out on both. But at least Little Sparta is complemented by Jencks's Garden of Cosmic Speculation, which is an inspirational masterpiece by any standards.

Of course, the pictures are great (some by Campbell herself) but this book deserves to be bought for its text. A thought-provoking read.

**Review by Richard B. Mawrey (November 2006).**

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