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*Garden 1942*

THE MUSE  
NEW YORK

11 WEST 53 STREET  
TELEPHONE: CIRCLE 5-8900  
CABLES: MODERNART, NEW-YORK

OFFICE OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD  
STEPHEN C. CLARK  
149 BROADWAY  
NEW YORK, N. Y.

*3/24*  
March 23, 1942

Dear Alfred:

I have received your letter of March 20th and read it aloud (with the exception of the postscript) to Philip Goodwin, and Abbott and Soby when I saw them this morning.

We had a short conference in reference to the plans for the garden, which I think are considerably improved since you last saw them, but I had to leave so soon that I did not get a chance to call you in. The upshot of the conference was that Philip Goodwin would get these plans in a little better shape and submit them to the Executive Committee early next week.

I appreciate all that you say in reference to the garden and I agree with a good deal of it, but the time is so short that we will have to do something quickly in order to be ready by the first of May, and it is too late to consider getting another architect. I hope, however, that you will bear in mind that these plans are temporary and can easily be changed. In any event, it would be foolish, I think, to try to lay out the ideal garden in view of the fact that we shall, in all probability, be building on some of this property in the not very distant future.

Whatever may be the merits of the present layout of the garden, it is certainly not an inviting place to sit and Mrs. Rockefeller, who has contributed one-half of the cost of this change, feels very strongly, as I do, that it is important for us to make the garden attractive during the coming summer, when so many people will be in town. Looking forward to the future, I am very strongly of the opinion that one of the most important things that the Museum can do is to make this garden attractive. It would do more to popularize the Museum than anything that I can think of and I am sure that you will realize that underexisting conditions our best hope of survival is to steadily broaden the basis of our popular support.

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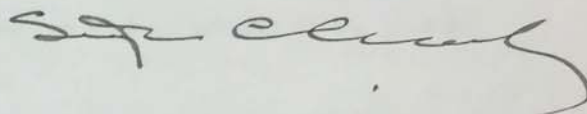
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Mr. Alfred H. Barr, Jr.

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This letter is written rather hastily but I will be glad to talk this subject over with you in more detail when you get back from your trip to the West.

Sincerely yours,



Mr. Alfred H. Barr, Jr.  
The Museum of Modern Art  
11 West 53rd Street  
New York City

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c.c. MR. ABBOTT

March 20, 1942

Dear Mr. Clark:

Here are a few notes on the garden plan submitted by Philip Goodwin on Wednesday afternoon, March 18th. This was the first time that I had heard about this proposal, except by vague rumor, so that my opinion of the plan is not the result of very mature reflection.

Hitherto the garden has been used primarily for the exhibition of sculpture; secondarily, but importantly, for other exhibitions often in connection with shows inside the building. The garden was prepared in a hurry and with extreme economy so far as fence, partition materials, plant materials and surfacing were concerned. In spite of this it has been greatly admired by several modern architects (including Ed Stone) and is generally considered the most successful modern garden design in the country, in spite of the fact that only a few thousand dollars were spent on it. This should not be scrapped unless we have something better to put in its place.

GENERAL USE: There is no reason why the garden should be kept exclusively for sculpture exhibition, though it would be hard to find a better general and continuous use, unless we can set up semi-permanent modern houses such as have been proposed several times in the past. If we could keep the full 350 feet there should be room for sculpture and houses and the newly proposed outdoor café or beer garden.

Rather than placing the café immediately behind the building, running its full length, I think it should be concentrated at the west end, with the

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To: Mr. Stephen C. Clark

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March 20, 1942

possibility of extending it eastward as far as the attendance requires. I think it would be deplorable to give over the whole of the garden to the rear of the Museum to tables, or to structures and planting primarily intended for a café, though I heartily approve giving over a part to this purpose, providing a major part of the garden is maintained for sculpture and temporary exhibitions.

FLEXIBILITY: In replanning the garden, particularly the part behind the building, it should be possible to convert the space into a café, or outdoor concert auditorium, or film theatre, or simple dance theatre, or exhibition space for architecture, or sculpture, or other material (e.g. the Mexican show). This would mean that permanent planting covering the whole area in back of the building should be avoided. If shade is necessary for the tables, umbrellas would be better than trees.

WINTER APPEARANCE: It should be kept in mind that the garden will be of no use for sitting outdoors during some seven months so that permanent fixtures primarily intended for the café should be concentrated at the west end, leaving the space in back of the building for sculpture or architecture during the other seven months of the year.

RESURFACING: I am heartily in favor of resurfacing the garden in part or entirely, since the gravel is very unsatisfactory, but some parts of the garden need not be resurfaced. Instead well surfaced paths could be laid, or one end, perhaps the eastern end, could be left as it is. A considerable section of the eastern end is already laid out in concrete.

I am in favor of two or three different shades of asphalt, providing the design is carefully studied.

DRAINAGE: If asphalt is substituted for gravel some new grading may have to be done, since a good deal of water now accumulates at the rear of the building. This condition would be much worse with an asphalt surface. Douglas

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To: Mr. Stephen C. Clark

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March 20, 1942

Baxter reports that there is a serious amount of seepage through the cellar walls of the Museum.

PLANT MATERIAL: I think the plan should preserve as much plant material as possible. Grass is probably impossible. The more Rhododendrons and evergreens we have the better for the winter appearance.

Sincerely,

Mr. Stephen C. Clark  
149 Broadway  
New York, N.Y.

ANB:vs

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Mr. Stephen C. Clark

March 20, 1942

*return to Barr*

1. Christopher Tunnard. He is probably the most brilliant young landscape architect and garden designer in the country. He teaches at the Harvard Architectural School.

March 20, 1942

CONFIDENTIAL Mrs. Assistant to Elliot Roper. Graduate of the Eastman School of Architecture, she is a good designer and has had a good deal of experience in the profession. Working with her we could keep the design in

Dear Mr. Clark:

This is a postscript to my longer letter on the garden plan.

I hope that you will not think me over-critical, but I must in all honesty let you know that I think that Philip Goodwin's plan for the garden was from the point of view of design very feeble indeed. It showed no grasp of modern forms at all; the only positive elements in it seemed vestiges of his Beaux Arts past and his memory of popular café gardens in Europe - I refer especially to the very dull layout of trees, which are used in French café gardens as an economical system of giving shade, rather than as something handsome to look at. I do not think any Beaux Arts regularity of symmetry is desirable in this garden, which should follow the English garden tradition of asymmetry and curved forms, particularly as it would exist in the center of a boringly rectilinear city plan. Whatever the faults of the present plan, and these are in large part due to economy, it does have a style and a careful study of the relation of backgrounds and spaces to sculpture. It also has a good deal of interest seen from above, which is important.

As the purposes of the garden are expanded by the café plan, etc., the need for a fine design is in no way diminished. I would like to propose that we ask that someone be brought in to work with Philip Goodwin on the design, perhaps one of the three following:



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To: Mr. Stephen C. Clark

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March 20, 1942

1. Christopher Tunnard. He is probably the most brilliant young landscape architect and garden designer in the country. He teaches at the Harvard Architectural School.
2. Alice Carson, Assistant to Elliot Noyes. Graduate of the Cambridge School of Landscape Architecture, she is a good designer and has had a good deal of experience since graduation. Working with her we could keep the design "in the family".
3. Ed Stone.

I am devoted to Philip Goodwin, who is one of the kindest and most generous people I know, but I am sorry to say I do not believe in his capacity as a designer in the modern spirit and was really shocked by the layout we looked at together on Wednesday. Naturally this letter is extremely confidential for I wouldn't want to hurt Phil's feelings.

Sincerely,

Mr. Stephen C. Clark  
149 Broadway  
New York, N. Y.

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*No answer - except to say it was <sup>too</sup> late*