

Currier Farm

Danby, Vermont

Photographs by Alan Ward 1983

Notes on the Making of the Photographs

Currier Farm is a small but significant design by landscape architect Dan Kiley in the foothills of the Green Mountains of Vermont. Kiley transformed an existing farmhouse with architectural additions, including a guest house and garage (1,6,7). He used new and existing stone walls to make a modern landscape with level terraces and lawns, as well as an orchard, on a rather steep hillside site (4-6,9). Many of Kiley's projects were collaborations with prominent architects, such as Eero Saarinen and Kevin Roche at the Miller house. However at the Currier Farm, Kiley had a more comprehensive responsibility which extended beyond the landscape to include the design of an addition to the farmhouse, as well as guest house and garage. Kiley was a landscape architect, but also a registered architect in New Hampshire. I am reminded of an early master of landscape design, Lancelot Brown, who also led the initial architectural design at Croome Court in England, as well as authoring the extensive landscape design to make a setting for the house.

There are three landscape zones in Kiley's design for the site. The house, its addition, and the surrounding level lawn, constitute the core architectural spaces at the heart of the plan. It is framed on three sides by a middle landscape that is characteristic of the Vermont countryside with birch trees, sugar maples and an orchard. On the hillside is a reforested naturalized landscape.

I first photographed the site in spring with limited results, however the image of the grid of apple trees in bloom, between the garage and house, made the trip worthwhile (9). I returned in autumn on a beautiful sunny day with peak fall colors. Fortunately, a few occasional clouds reduced the contrast level, and allowed views to be rendered with a full tonal range. The sequence of images shows the entry experience, beginning along a gravel drive leading to the garage with a curving line of sugar maples, along with clusters of birch trees (1-3). A view from under a vine-covered arbor on the garage toward the house is a key part of the arrival sequence, that also expresses Kiley's unified approach to the design of the architecture and site (8). A path through the apple orchard leads down steps to the new entry to the house in the addition (11-13).

The concluding views within the forest were in softened light that allowed me to make images that are characteristic of Kiley's design approach - to make a level architectonic plane for the house and garden on a sloping site (14,15). The course of a mountain brook, visible in the foreground of the image, was kept quite natural (14). It drops into a rectangular, elevated basin and water flows out into narrow channels along the edges of the level lawn, which is the plinth or base for the house (15). It was a clear expression of Kiley's aim to make plainly visible what is natural and what is a constructed landscape.

List of Photographs

1. View on entry drive to garage and guest house
2. View west of birches along entry drive
3. View east of stand of birches
4. Upper terrace arrival court with low fieldstone wall
5. Sugar Maples and house on lower terrace
6. Sugar Maples, middle terrace and lawn
7. Arbor and guest house at upper terrace
8. View west from arbor to apple orchard
9. Perennial border, orchard and hillside
10. View south of sloping lawn terrace and orchard
11. Oblique view of path from entry court to house
12. Path from entry court to house in autumn
13. Oblique view of path to house in spring
14. Hillside brook connecting to water basin
15. Water basin, channel and stairs to lower terrace
16. View west to the Taconic Mountains

































Notes

Selected Publication of the Photographs:

The Work of Dan Kiley: A Dialogue on Design Theory, School of Architecture, University of Virginia, 1982
Landscape Designs of Dan Kiley, Process Architecture, 1982
Catalogue for "Built Landscapes: Gardens in the Northeast," 1984
"Built Landscapes/Gardens in the Northeast Exhibition and Catalogue," Awards Issue of *Landscape Architecture*, September/October 1984
Van Valkenburgh, Michael, "Two Views of Landscape Design: Dan Kiley, A. E. Bye," *Orion Nature Quarterly*, Spring 1985
"Photoquest: Winning Results of Our First Photography Competition," *Landscape Architecture*, January/February 1987
Walker, Peter and Simo, Melanie, *Invisible Gardens: The Search for Modernism in the American Landscape*, 1994
Kiley, Dan and Jane Amidon, *Dan Kiley: The Complete Works of America's Master Landscape Architect*, 1999
Ward, Alan, Book Review of *Dan Kiley: The Complete Works of America's Master Landscape Architect*, *Land Forum* 03, 1999
Tozer, Eliot, "Laureate of Landscape," *Horticulture: Gardening at its Best*, December 2000
Rainey, Reuben and Treib, Marc, *Dan Kiley Landscapes: The Poetry of Space*, 2009

All Photographs © Alan Ward

Exhibitions of the Photographs:

"Dan Kiley: Classicist in the Modern Landscape" Harvard Graduate School of Design, 1982
"Built Landscapes: Gardens of the Northeast" Harvard Graduate School of Design and circulated nationally, 1984-85
"Dan Kiley, Landscape Architect – the First Two Decades" Harvard Graduate School of Design, 1997