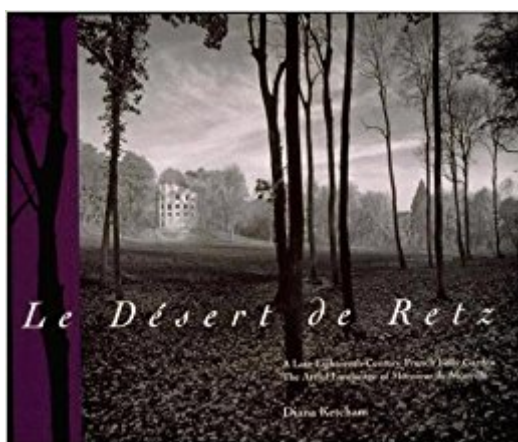


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Le Désert De Retz: A Late Eighteenth-Century French Folly Garden - The Artful Landscape Of Monsieur De Monville



Synopsis

The Désert de Retz, the supreme surviving example of the folly garden, is one of the most amply and beautifully documented of France's historic gardens. Since 1990, when the Arion Press published the first book on this garden outside of Paris, the Désert de Retz has been transformed by an ongoing restoration. That limited, fine-press edition is long out of print and much sought after. This new edition reproduces in a smaller oblong format the material in the original book. Diana Ketcham's text has been expanded and updated to reflect recent scholarship and physical changes to the site. There are also new photographs that show the restored landscape and the complete restoration of the folly known as the Broken Column to its original state as a false ruin. The 100 illustrations consist of views of the construction of the park (1774-1789); models from antiquity and analogues in contemporary gardens; facsimiles of the 26 engravings of the garden that appeared in Georges Le Rouge's *Détails de nouveaux jardins à la mode: Jardins anglo-chinois*, the most important illustrated book on gardens of the eighteenth century; and photographs of the buildings and grounds taken by the British photographer Michael Kenna. These beautiful photographs, together with Diana Ketcham's carefully researched text, capture the haunting atmosphere of the place during its transition from the romantic, overgrown state of benign neglect, which so intrigued the Surrealists, to the clearing and building that today preserve a balance between the encroachments of unruly vegetation and disintegration.

Book Information

Paperback: 143 pages

Publisher: The MIT Press (February 7, 1997)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0262611325

ISBN-13: 978-0262611329

Product Dimensions: 9 x 10.6 x 0.3 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.2 pounds

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars 2 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #491,270 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #303 in [Books > Arts & Photography > Architecture > Landscape](#) #322 in [Books > Crafts, Hobbies & Home > Gardening & Landscape Design > Garden Design](#) #953 in [Books > Engineering & Transportation > Engineering > Reference > Architecture](#)

Customer Reviews

"Diana Ketchum's magnificently researched and beautifully accomplished text, with its accompanying images, is not a book for mere specialists. It is a book of interest to garden enthusiasts, to art historians, to surrealistsâ "to anyone with a taste for fantasy, architectural metaphor, the poetry of vision, the aesthetics of stone and leaf." â "Arthur C. Danto, Johnsonian Professor of Philosophy, Columbia University

Diana Ketcham is the staff architecture critic and book review editor for the Oakland Tribune. Her architecture criticism appears in the New Criterion, The Nation, and the New York Times.

Ms. Ketcham has given full breath to the story of Le Desert de Retz, the fanstastic late 18th C. creation of Monsieur de Monville. The place and the book don't quite occupy the space they should in general conciousness, but it's interesting to note by whom Msr de Monville was inspired (Piranesi and others) and who he inspired (Thomas Jefferson's UVA Library). Ms. Ketcham reviews each of the estate's main buildings and follies and creates a picture of how Le Desert came to be, how it nearly came to destruction, and how it was thankfully saved. The broken column at Desert de Retz is for me, a must see in my lifetime, largely as a result of this book. Do not mistake this for a coffe table book, but do take it for a work of beauty and insight...The reproductions of the vintage etching are very good, and the contemporary photographs by Michael Kenna are excquisite. The vintage photographs from the late 19th & early 20th century are an added bonus. It's easy to see why the surrealists were inspired by Le Desert, my only complaint is that I would have liked to know a bit more about any surrealist adventures (if any) at Le Desert...

Intrigued by the cover I bought the book sight unseen online and was very surprised to find it as beautiful inside. Diana has done a remarkable job getting the message across. This book is a pleasure to pick up at any given moment and just fantasize.

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