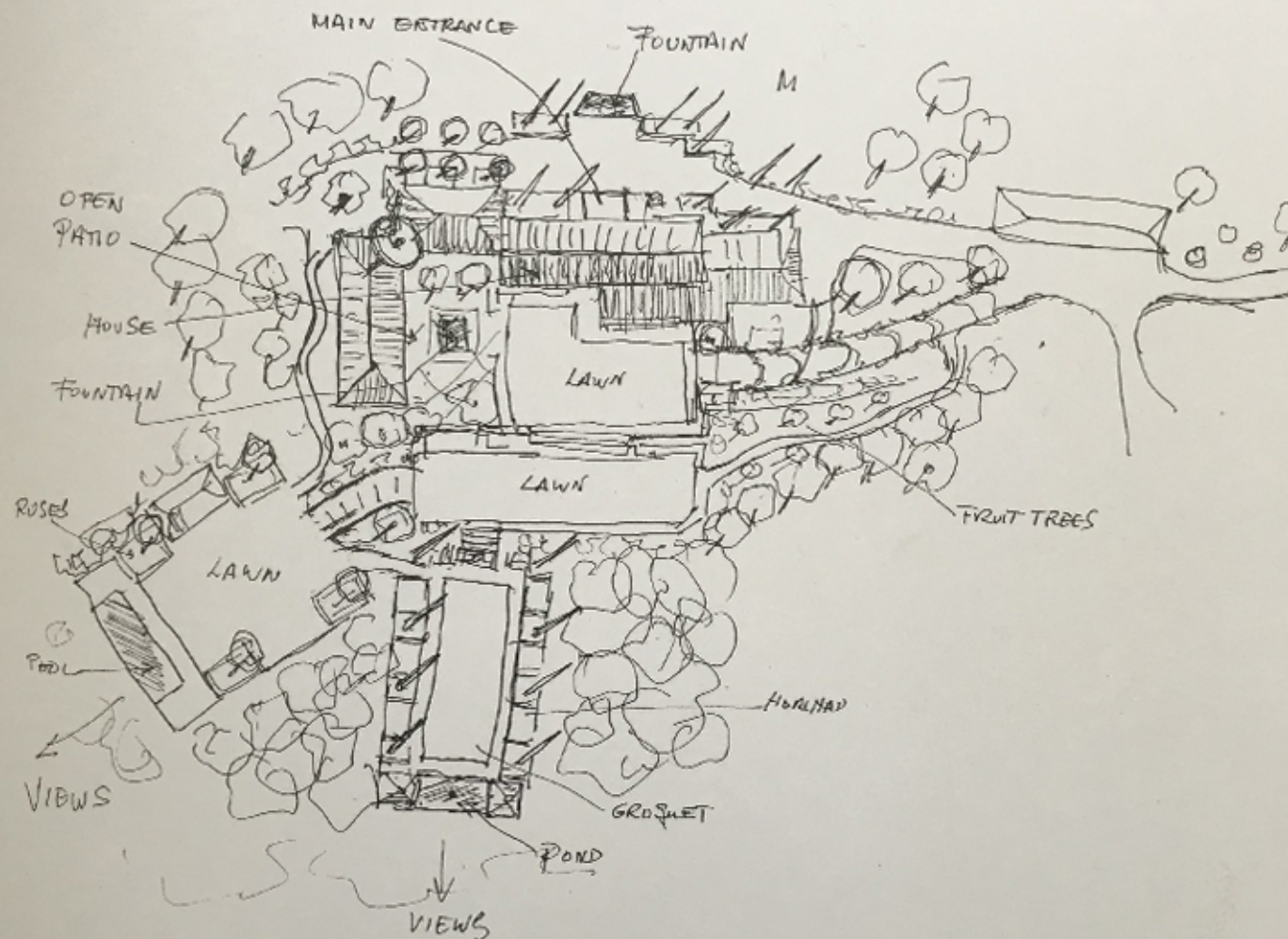


Gardens for the Senses

The Spanish Gardens of
Javier Mariátegui







The speaking garden

If there is something unique about Castile it is its light: clear, transparent – an atmosphere wiped clean by the chilly winter winds, which becomes even purer the further one is from town.

This garden lies on the southern slope of a mountain, looking over the axis of a valley that reaches far away, covered in picturesquely composed shrubland and small olive groves – a valley facing west, which aligns precisely with the sunset at some times of the year. In another direction, the garden looks over the hillside washed laterally by the evening light, becoming shaded and orange-tinted as the sun sets.

Its construction was a work of titans – more than two hundred lorryloads of enriched soil mixed with gravel, of mulch and of drainage were driven across the garden. On the limestone bedrock, which would not let a single drop of water through, gravel galleries had to be made for the evacuation of excess irrigation and rainfall; over those, soil was laid for plants to grow on. This garden was used as a testing ground for numerous unpromisingly-named varieties of plants brought from the Netherlands, which had never grown in such extreme conditions and which generally fared very well.

To reach it, one has to cross arid fields inhabited only by esparto grass, holm oak, bearberry and juniper.

They are soliless areas, which must withstand extreme winters and endless summers without a single drop of water – yet suddenly, climbing up the hill, the landscape changes, and the esparto gives way to shrubland and then to larger trees. When approaching the house, the terrain becomes craggy, adorned by small, fenced olive groves.





When heading towards this house, one has to traverse arid, semi-desert zones and climb barren, lunar like slopes. When getting nearer, everything starts to change. Shrubland at first, then wheat fields and large holm oaks. On arrival, everything is different.



A croquet field surrounded by an orderly orchard, and water at the end of all the vistas ... water for the birds to drink, and acting as a boundary to the garden.





