

Sculpture-Garden

The Position of Garden Sculpture in Tehran Urban Space

Abstract | Garden Sculpture is one of the most complete examples of interaction between art and nature that has a history in the West and European culture that its classical form dates back to ancient times. After modern times, Garden Sculpture is being considered as a new kind of environmental art that manifest the relationship between human, nature and landscape. In the Qajar era, sculpture, as a kind of public art was entered to the urban space and in somehow was emplaced in private garden sas a symbol of renewal. Also Qajar garden design was gradually replaced by European garden confronting with the fundamental changes in western-style urbanizing patterns. During the Pahlavi era, by getting empowered the stream of modernization patronizing, the reviving of park building and on the other side the presence of sculpture in urban spaces were increased, but no artwork resembling garden sculpture according to its original meaning was made in city of Tehran. After nearly a decade of the Islamic Revolution, gradually the numbers of urban sculptures have been increased and although the thought of emplacing sculptures in public spaces has been resulted in implementation of the idea, in number of parks and green-space areas including the green area of Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art (TMOCA) and the garden of Iranian artists forum, but it seems the urban artworks of Tehran are still away from the original structure and concept of garden sculpture.

This article is seeking to answer the question of why garden sculpture, failed to find a place in Tehran urban space, after almost a century; and concludes - by accepting the idea that garden sculpture has been a kind of art work along with the tradition of gardening and also is an artistic expressing of people relationship of each land with nature- that by replacing garden with park and destruction the context of forming garden sculpture, it seems that we have never been successful in Iranianized this imported phenomenon and having garden sculpture with an Iranian identity.

Keywords | Garden Sculpture, Park, The garden sculpture of TMOCA, The garden sculpture of Iranian artists' forum.

Introduction | Intellectual currents and different gardening styles in the world, including the Persian garden, English garden, French garden and Hindi garden show its ideological nature and the different kind of worldview of their peoples towards the human relationship with nature. So we can say that garden is a cultural issue that is shaped according to the human aspects and natural features of each land which is recreated over time. The aesthetics of gardening's tradition comes from a different world view in every culture.

Garden sculpture as a new kind of gardening's tradition and along with it, represents the relation between man, nature and art. In garden sculpture, the priority is designing the garden and the sculptures are the arrays serving landscaping and naturalizing garden that ultimately the whole of garden sculpture is considered as an artwork. Moreover, garden sculpture is an extensive totality which, both as landscape and also as environmental sculpture¹, is human intervention in nature. therefore, garden sculpture is not a separate compound consisting of two components of garden and sculptures that sculptures are merely placed in it. It should also be noted that garden is different from green space and parks and is not also formed based on the subjective ideas of designer and is rooted in cultural patterns of each country.

The land of Iran, on one hand owns Persian garden with a history of several thousand years, as an impressive model in the world's gardening and on the other hand, it has been witnessing the arrival of modernism that of its manifestations is the presentation of sculpture in urban space. Although, sculpture due to the ideological and religious beliefs, in public and urban space has not a history as old as gardening, but after a century of experience, the question arises here is that why garden sculpture has failed to properly shape in urban space of Tehran? The desire of urban managers for creating garden sculpture in city of Tehran also confirmed this question².

It might be said that two examples of garden sculpture- the garden sculpture of Tehran Museum of

Contemporary Art and the garden sculpture of Iranian artists' forum- are present in Tehran that emphasizing on absence of them would be a wrong expression, but it is necessary to have an overview on the situation of these two places in this study.

Hypothesis | Since garden sculpture is considered as a kind of artwork in line with the gardening history, it seems the reason for failure of garden sculpture in contemporary Tehran to be formed as a sort of garden designing and environmental art might be the transformation of Persian garden to the park and its historical rupture.

A Review on the History of Garden Sculpture in West

It might be said that garden sculpture as a combination of art (sculpture) and Landscape design (gardening) is essentially a Western phenomenon that its history dates back to the ancient times in Europe; on this basis, the Romans used the statues of gods and kings to decorate gardens; Although, It must be emphasized that garden in its turn belongs to the Goddess Venus³, which indicates the importance of garden⁴. With the conversion of the Roman Empire to Christianity, the sculptures were considered as idols and removed from their locations. But in Renaissance time, the sculptures were returned again to the gardens and the Renaissance gardens converted to a museum – a house for muses, or the goddess. The custom of putting sculptures in the Renaissance European gardens has expanded and gardening becomes an aristocratic art, therefore collecting the sculptures was supposed as a competitive entertainment. In this era, the classical sculptures were praised and it was believed that they trigger reflection. The presence of Garden sculpture during the Civil War and under the influence of the Bible commands that do not worship idols, was declined. To the extent that the melting of the statues was used to construct church bells and supply the ammunition (arsenal). Reinstallation of sculptures in the gardens dates back to the year 1660 A.D.; it was the time when the northern European immigrants

had copies of the statues of Roman, Greek and Italian Renaissance. The reason for considering the classical status in Landscape Gardens was a double effort for recreating the ancient landscapes (see. Gardenvisit.com).

This process continues until it reaches its climax in the eighteenth century. “Many of the writers speak of “Reading” a garden”. The symbolic gardens of that time, in fact, acted like poetry, humor, thesis and statement. These gardens had not any flower, instead they had an array of diverse sculptural and architectural features- temples, statues, decorative caves, springs, Memorial column, bridges, sanctum and similar other things that were observable during the visiting of audiences. These features were carrying the message of gardens, but the form of garden and planting were also important “(Ross, 2008). Once again in this century, the church opposition and the sermons of the Pope to the statue (1731 A.D.) resulted in reduction of designing the garden sculptures.

From the second half of the 19th century a new chapter of garden sculpture begins. New topics such as bull, prehistoric monsters and the symbolic sculptures of other countries have come into garden. These kinds of sculptures reflect the Victorian thinking of recognition foreign lands, past times and alien culture. Moreover, Victorian time indicates a tendency to the idealistic artworks that represents subjects from mythology and literature. The new generation of sculptors and garden designers were emerged in the 1930s that influenced by modern trends in art and design and had hoped to create surreal art forms of abstract and minimal. The English sculptors such as “Henry Moore” were the leaders of this movement. This was the era that garden designers were trying to have abstract and minimalistic design for gardens along with the modern sculptors. However, at first the standpoint of two groups - designers and sculptors- toward each other was associated with some pessimism; As designers believed that modern sculptures can hardly be present in the gardens because they might be understood less than the classical statues, but later they realized that sculptors’ ideas could be used highly; As the

“lying” statue of Henry Moore has been inspired Garden design. On the other hand the sculptors such as Henry Moore did not have a good feeling toward the insertion of status in the gardens and believed that the statue loses its independence by becoming a part of garden design and this remind them the days that sculptors were working under the dictates (orders) of architects. Of course, the Moore’s look changed and he loved to put his sculptures in a landscape perspective to the extent that in his later years he put a significant number of his works in his private garden (for more information see. Gardenvisit.com). But after this period and with the emergence of new forms of art such as environmental art (1960 A.D.) gradually, the garden sculpture raised as a kind of avant-garde gardening and a form of environmental art. As “Mark Rosenthal” name garden sculpture and art park alongside the other environmental art forms, including: 1) Masculine artworks in environment 2) Transient artworks in environment, 3) environmental performance art 4) architectural insertions 5) Instructional art 6) Pre-gardens (Ross, 2008). Although, it appears that garden sculpture has a subtle difference with the other environmental arts, in a way that environmental arts often include artistic intervention in natural and pristine environment but garden sculpture creates its context as an artistic artwork as well; The same as poetry and painting that in place of fine arts can read and recreate the nature by an artistic expression. In other words garden sculpture is the manifestation of art in art. In 1770 A.D. “Horace Walpole”: “Poetry, Painting, and Gardening, or the Science of Landscape, will forever by men of Taste be deemed Three Sisters, or The Three New Graces who dress and adorn Nature” (Ross,2008:125).

Generally, by reviewing the history of garden sculpture in the West it seems that before the new era we have been faced with gardens in which the sculpture has been presented as an array in line with gardening, but after the postmodern era, it is the time that garden sculpture arises as a new species of environmental art and urban art. Of course, it might be said that, during the course of time the relationship between sculpture



Pic 1: The collective experience of interaction between man, nature and art, Garden Sculpture publisher, Dallas. Source: <http://www.nashersculpturecenter.org/engage/event?id=354>



Pic 2: The diversity of audiences and experience the relationship between nature and art, Garden Sculpture of Minneapolis, New York. Source: <http://www.walkerart.org/magazine/2013/martin-friedman-design-quarterly-minneapolis>

and garden design has been tangled together; whether as an array that has been for reading garden and its insertion within the garden was considered based on garden designing (the combination of sculpture and nature) and whether at time that designing of garden and sculpture has been contemplated as an unique artwork (assuming sculpture and nature as a single entity). In any case, garden sculpture is the symbiosis of art and nature that calls human to make an experience. The important point is that the concept of garden sculpture has not been appeared suddenly in western culture and art but instead has been formed along with historical tradition of several thousand years of gardening and sculpturing. Today, the well-known landscape designers contribute to the design of garden sculpture in urban areas and compete with each other over it.

It is noteworthy that in current time, the garden sculptures exhibit a different form of relation between artwork and place that either in terms of scale, proportion, insertion and etc. rate their position or they are kind of artworks which are designed considering the place (location) or even obtain all its clues (reasons of existence) in response to its environment. These art works by being stationed (installation), addressing and making change in their location, are questioning our relationship with landscape, nature and art and forces us to deeply think about the nature, about our relationship with nature and the relationship between nature and art (For more information see Ross, 2008). These are the goals that are expected from a garden sculpture not from a park or green space. "In modern green space design process, the designer creates a totality and then nurtures it. He must build a scenario of a subjective idea therefore, different experiences in different times and places are created "(Barati, 2001:15). It should also be noted that an artwork in a garden will not only be added to garden design, but also will create a different experience (Prinzing, 2012). In garden sculpture when attempt to make a link between art and nature, the relationship is such that the artworks usually accompany background elements of nature (garden sculpture, 2013); (Pics 1 & 2).

Garden Sculpture in Tehran

Before entering to the discussion of garden sculpture, it should be noted that Persian gardening, as everybody acknowledge it, have had an important role in shaping the world's culture of gardening and has a thousand years of history; it also has reproduced itself over the course of time. "Nasser Barati" in his article of "Garden or Park" believes that the reason for this continuity and stability arises from the deep correlation between this element (garden) and the other aspects of Iran's culture (Barati, 2011:12). According to Mansouri (2005) beauty in Persian garden initiates based on the artist interpretation of his/her mental concepts and over time takes on new tone and color under the polish of history and environment. He mentions the beautifying elements in Iranian garden as: the expanded landscape, the presence of water, spatial diversity and independent spaces, interaction with nature rather than naturalism or nature evasion, sensational landscaping, rectangular geometry, introversion and closeness and also bicolor garden. As it appears, neither in this article nor in any other resources that author has been encountered with, it could be found talk or even sculptural look to the natural elements and their arrangement among the beautifying elements of Iranian garden. This view may be rooted in Iranians religious beliefs banning representation and visualization of living creatures, moreover in this viewpoint to the nature it is always seeking interaction with nature and its elements, and it is not trying to impose its existence on nature by making synthetic elements.

Now Iranian garden with this background and kind of viewpoint enters into the Qajar era. From this time onwards for keeping pace with modernization trends and under manifestations of European civilization a new trends began to emerge: Including the presence of statue as a decorative element in gardens and urban spaces and forming a new space called Park. In this accompaniment with European examples, the new gardens of Qajar era were given "factors such as curved paths, lakes, statues and flowers hills.

The major changes are categorized in three fields: planting and arrangements of plants; use of water and decorative elements such as statues" (Jeyhani, 2013: 8). However, Jeyhani points out that the use of decorative elements did not matter as much as the other two groups.

The Iranian garden that prior to Qajar era, was not merely dedicated for the nobilities- as even the small residential buildings had a small garden in form of croft (see. Barati, 2011: 14)-in this time, turned partly into specified forms, in compliance with European pattern and changed into the allocated gardens for the nobilities as their non-public names indicates it, including: the king's garden (Bagh-e Shah), garden of Kamran Mirza, garden of Exchequer (garden of Mostofi) and garden of Moayer ol-Mamalek and from this time the term of park enters into Persian language; At first, this word put aside the word of garden; as some statesmen simply adopt the name of park to their private garden: Park-e Aminoldoleh, Park-e Atabak, Park-e Zelolsoltan and after that destroys the whole entity and structure of Iranian garden and no clues of garden remained and after that it turns into Park.

As mentioned above, "sculpture as a decorative element and imitating Western gardens was used on main routes or inside the fountain of [Qajar's Gardens]. It is most likely that the first examples be located in the circular island of Bagh-e Shah that the statue of Naser-al-din shah on horseback was installed over a pedestal "(Irani Behbahani & Soltani, 2003: 95). Regarding that different resources consider the sculpture of Baghe-Shah as the first examples of sculptures in Iranian garden, it should be noted that Naser-al-din shah first desired to install his own statue on horseback at Toopkhaneh square which was considered as a public space; as Itimad-os-Saltaneh in his memoirs (6th of Shaban 1304) (1925) states that: "The statue of the king on horseback was cast in iron... it had been ordered to be installed in the middle of Toopkhaneh square "(Itimad-os-Saltaneh, 1966: 496). But the statue eventually because of the prejudices of the people,



Pic 3: The mere insertion of sculpture in green space, regardless of background visual effect. The garden sculpture of “Museum of Contemporary Art”. Photo: Padideh Advand, 2016.

and the fear of Clergymen installed in the area of Baghe-Shah (King’s garden), in the middle of island which was built for this purpose, although Shah’s statue in Bagh-e-shahcan is considered as the first example of a sculpture in the garden, but some points need to be considered: these gardens due to being closed and private places were not considered as public spaces open to people, for this reason, Naser-al-din shah wanted the statue to be installed in the Toopkhaneh square (see. Navaie & Malekzadeh, 2011 and Itimad-os-Saltaneh, 1986). Another point is that apart from this figurative sculptor that is an artwork, the remaining status in other gardens were kind of imitation of the other European object-like elements such as angels and

other living creatures that often were considered to be used as decorative elements of fountains, ponds and swimming pools. Generally, these sculptures “Have been added to the garden as reformism and demonstration that was affected by the West culture” (Irani Behbahani & Soltani, 2003: 96) not as an interactive presentation of artwork with nature for general community of people.

In general, the first generation of urban parks in Europe (late 17th century to the 19th) that is a template for gardening in late Qajar era and the common style of park building to date, is under the influence of enlightenment’s culture of naturalism parks that act as natural island within the urban contexts. In this way, although its eclectic aspect



Pic 4: closeness and lack of audience. The garden sculpture of "Museum of Contemporary Art". Photo: Padideh Adelvand, 2016.

strongly attracts attention, but for the first time we encounter with an interpretation of nature that considers it as a classic beauty and particular species with emotional morphology. In this interpretation there is no trace of Iranian semantics culture toward the elements of nature and landscape (see. Mansouri, 2010: 4).

From the Pahlavi era, status as a form of public art gradually entered into the urban public spaces specifically into squares (that was considered as governmental element) and parks that had been previously imported from Europe to visual culture of Iranian cities. After the Islamic Revolution until today, based on the statistical data, the highest-volume of urban sculptures have been located in Tehran's parks. However, since other communal spaces, such as streets and squares in Tehran have lost their true function, it is not surprising that public parks and gardens have the most important role in creating public and social spaces and provide the most appropriate space for the presence of urban art.

Now, one more time we pose the main question of this article that why garden sculpture failed to take place in Tehran urban space. It seems that within the years that Iranian gardens flourished, status had no place in the aesthetics of Persian garden for reasons that were explained before and when it was accepted as a form of public art in urban space, no garden was designed based on the Iranian pattern, that in combination with status could create a new species of Persian garden sculpture and Iranian look to the nature and art. Once again, it should be noted that this article considers garden sculpture as a new version of gardening along with its history.

As mentioned earlier, today, it is often referred to two garden sculptures in Tehran: The garden sculpture of Tehran Museum of Contemporary Art and the garden sculpture of Iranian artist's forum. In this section it is necessary that these two samples once again be addressed from the structural perspective. In the Museum of Contemporary Art, although the designer (Kamran Diba) from the beginning orders a sculpture for the entrance of the museum and in

relation to the purpose of it- that is the exhibition of contemporary art- but in fact, the sculptures today are placed on the grounds of the museum where they were not seen in the initial design and are artworks that were purchased for the treasury of Museum, but over time, the collection adopted the name of garden sculpture for itself. Unfortunately, this naming today might be the consequence of demolishing the samples of Tehran gardens and from that time this name has been put on a conceptual set in green area and park by



Pic 5: The lack of proper placement of the statue. Garden sculpture of Iranian Artist's forum. Photo: phenomenon Adelvnd, 2016.

mistakenly; such as celebrities gardens, art garden, bird's garden and books garden. In general we can say that the grounds of Museum of Contemporary Art, is merely a green space that unique sculptures with high artistic values in the world have been placed in it. Adopting from "Irwin" in the article of "Being and circumstance" (Ross, 2008), that gives a classification of relation between artwork and location, it might be said with few exception, that these sculptures are location-oriented because their concept and purpose are not dependent on any specific location and are independent from context that can be displayed at any other places (the earliest relation between artwork and context). Of course, their proximity to the Museum of Contemporary Art helps to do an easily semantic reading. Today, that people are not allowed to visit the area easily and its closure space is also an emphasis on that, it has become far from a public art. Another point to note is that the museum rarely addressing general public due to its nature, and those who are allowed to visit the sculptures of the area who constitute a specific class of society (Pics 3 & 4).

And about the Iranian artist's forum, the sculptures are placed on green space of the Park. Quoting from the news explaining the reasons for its establishment indicate the true nature of it: "Proximity to artist's forum is the features of this garden sculpture that provides a good platform for its establishment. It is rather pleased that this garden sculpture is not closed, and the doors are always open to sculpture, sculptor and the audience" (Tandis Magazine, 2003: 17), "Until next month the first garden sculpture with an area of 5 hectares consisting of 21 artworks will be opened in Iran-Shahr Park ...the number of artworks is planned to reach 30 in the next few months. Iran-Shahr Park next month will be renamed to garden sculpture" (Tandis Magazine, 2004). In this case the common identity of garden and park is notable; placing a collection of sculptures in the park area and rename it to the garden sculptures. The sculptures of this collection are the same kind as the contemporary museum, independent sculptures that can be exhibited anywhere



Pic 6: The lack of attention to natural changes of context and absconding of sculpture from the sight of the audience. Garden sculpture of Iranian

else. As, they have been moved from elsewhere to this place and the audiences belong to specific class of artists due to the activities of the artist's forum. It should be noted that designing garden in a garden sculpture is the most important part of creating an artwork as it is also seen in the successful examples of foreign works and the other activities such as

Conclusion | In Iran before the Qajar era and prior to getting acquainted with the issue of urban sculpture, in Iranian gardening there was no place for building sculptors as an array serving the aesthetics aspects of Persian garden due to the cultural and ideological reasons. After that by observing some classical examples in Europe as an element of patronizing modernity, the garden sculpture enters into the private gardens and finally by adopting the Frankish style of gardening and conversion the patterns of Persian gardens to park and green area, the sculptures were

establishment of museums, exhibition and galleries are considered as peripheral activities of garden. But it seems that this trend is reversed in Tehran as the museum, the cultural activities and exhibitions are counted as major activities, and the green area, park or the surrounded area of garden are considered as subsidiary and peripheral space (Pics 5 & 6).

entered into parks as a kind of public art. Generally, it might be said that the examples of garden sculpture in Tehran are only the parks and green spaces that sculptures have been placed in them; on the other words, sculptures in garden sculpture of Tehran are not those arrays serving "reading the garden" and garden sculpture is not considered per se an artwork. By accepting this idea that the reliance of public art is on the common assumptions of community, it might be said that in designing Iranian garden sculpture is required to have a look at the Iranian garden as a

cultural phenomenon and territorial identity of Iran and apply its pattern in designing. It is recommended that for creating garden sculpture that could attract audiences and tourists and also acquiring Iranian identifying components, a group of landscape

designers, environmental and urban sculptors by cooperating with each other and by re-reading the Iranian gardening pattern- that is at its ultimate interaction with nature- create a new aesthetic kind of gardening in form of garden sculpture.

Endnotes

1. The environmental sculpture encompasses the audience; who experience an artwork through entry and movement in space. The elements of time and movement are the important part of the viewer's experience. An environmental status creates an integrated mood and atmosphere. The aim of environmental status is to create a holistic experience of observing (Galston, n.d.).

2. By reviewing the News of last few years we can comprehend that efforts are triggered toward garden sculpture including "Establishing a garden sculpture, the realization of a dream" (Journal of Tandis, 2003) or more recently: "We hope that the urban beautification organization following holding symposium, consider a space for garden sculpture that sculptures be exhibited apparently "(Image report from Tehran 7th sculpture symposium, 2015).

3. In the ancient Roman, Venus has been god of spring and nature and her bunker was built outside the city. During the Punic Wars) Carthage) (3rd century B.C.) another aspects of Venus appeared and made a relation with Aphrodite- the goddess of love- and in the late 3rd century B.C. arises as a political patron (Sheldon, 2014).

4. Locating the statues in the gardens of that time is indicative of a rule: the Goddess had a key position on the terrace, where the routs collided and the path were ended, the sculptures of cherubim and nymphs were lower in position and statues of animals including lions were at the foot of the stairway as a security guard and the statue of dolphins in the middle of pool (see. Gardenvisit.com).

5. Farhad Sassani has translated the word of "landscape" to "scene" in Stephen Ross article.

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