‘Neither landscape nor architecture, but both:’
James Rose and Modern Environmental Space

The first biography of James Rose (1913-1991) examines the work of one of the most radical figures in the history of mid-century landscape design. A landscape architect who was as skilled with words as he was with plants and Fiberglas, Rose incisively critiqued the patterns of post-war suburban land use that were destroying the natural world, while creating alternative designs for integrated houses-and-gardens that incorporated a conservation ethic into a modern design aesthetic. Inspired by kinetic modern sculpture, Rose called his house-and-garden fusions, “Space Sculptures with Shelters.”

Along with Garrett Eckbo and Dan Kiley, Rose helped usher the profession of landscape architecture into the modern era in the 1930s. In a short three-year span following his 1937 expulsion from Harvard, Rose published 19 articles in Pencil Points, Architectural Record and California Arts and Architecture. These both established a modern model for the profession and explored the nature of landscape design in the modern era. After the war he continued to write articles and produced four innovative books: Creative Gardens (1958), Gardens Make Me Laugh (1965), Modern American Gardens (1967) and The Heavenly Environment (1987). Rose created landscapes mostly throughout the eastern United States, but his most famous work was his own home in Ridgewood, New Jersey—now the James Rose Center for Landscape Architectural Research and Design—a living demonstration of his approach to design as a never-ending process of change and development.

Dean Cardasis
RLA, FASLA,
Professor Emeritus, Rutgers the State University of New Jersey;
Director, James Rose Center; Principal, Cave Hill Landscape Architects

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Dean Cardasis, FASLA, is a professor emeritus in the Department of Landscape Architecture at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey and a partner at Cave Hill Landscape Architects in Leverett, Massachusetts. In these capacities, he has taught design studios and published on modern and contemporary landscape design history and theory, while producing nationally published and awarded gardens, parks and memorials of his own. As Director of the James Rose Center for Landscape Architectural Research and Design, he has documented and otherwise helped to preserve the works of the pioneer of modern landscape architecture after whom the Center is named, while administering research and outreach programs that address the transformation of suburbia in the age of sustainability. He has recently completed Rose’s first biography entitled, James Rose: A Voice Offstage.

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