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Changing Perspectives

By JULIE LASKY SEPT. 18, 2013



A meander through a small, precious setting describes the experience of visiting the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston. And now Michael Van Valkenburgh, the landscape architect, has replicated that experience in a pocket-size garden next to the original museum building and near its new Renzo Piano-designed addition.

No one is certain why this meditative patch is called the Monks Garden, but it has existed from the time Mrs. Gardner founded the museum in 1903 and undergone a few renovations since then. Mr. Van Valkenburgh introduced a sinuous path that draws out one's experience of the 0.2-acre garden. And to offset the feeling of enclosure created by a surrounding brick wall, he filled it with a "miniature forest of flowers and trees," he said. Maple, birch and stewartia provide the canopy, while some 7,000 plants, including hellebore and ferns, carpet the ground. Information:(617) 566-1401 or gardnermuseum.org.

A version of this article appears in print on September 19, 2013, on Page D3 of the New York edition with the headline: Changing Perspectives.