

INTRODUCTION

“KHRUSHCHEV'S DUE AT IDLEWILD”

At nine o'clock on the morning of 18 September 1959, Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev and his wife, Nina, set off in a forty-car motorcade from the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel.¹ The couple—accompanied by their son, two daughters, and a son-in-law—had arrived by train from Washington the previous morning. Their destination this day was Hyde Park, where Khrushchev was to meet former first lady Eleanor Roosevelt and pay respects at the grave of her late husband, the thirty-second president. It was the first American visit by a Soviet head of state, and in the middle of the Cold War no less. Sputnik had ended its three-month spin around the Earth the previous year. The Berlin Crisis had only just been resolved. In January, Fidel Castro took the reins of power in Cuba. The U2 affair was just a few months off; the Bay of Pigs and Berlin Wall on the near horizon. It was a fraught and perilous time in the world.

As the motorcade swung across town to the West Side Highway, the combative Soviet hammered away in Russian to his beleaguered Brahmin host—UN ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge Jr. The group sped north past Riverside Park on the Henry Hudson Parkway into the Bronx. At the Westchester line, where the road becomes the Saw Mill River Parkway, the city's motorcycle patrolmen were replaced by state troopers. The big tail-finned Cadillacs roared north along Tibbetts Brook Park, around Hawthorne Circle and on to the Taconic State Parkway. The road had been fully cleared of traffic, of course, allowing the mile-long motorcade to clip along at over 70 miles an hour. Time was short; Khrushchev was due to speak at the United Nations that very afternoon.² After laying a wreath at Roosevelt's grave—and grabbing a roll of bread (“one for the road,” he quipped)—Khrushchev was rushed back to the city just in time for his speech.

Afterward the premier was launched on a whirlwind tour of New York City. His motorcade made its way downtown on the East River (FDR) Drive. “The cars passed under three of the great East River bridges,” reported the *New York Times*; “on the land side, several of the city's largest housing projects reared on the site of old slums.” The motorcade made its way around the Battery and onto Broadway, past Bowling Green to Trinity Church and Wall Street; they sped by the Stock Exchange and Fraunces Tavern. With the sky now ambered by the setting sun, Khrushchev was hurried back north again along the East River to 34th Street and the Empire State Building, where he was taken up to the observation deck. The tour continued the next morning, through Central Park and up Seventh Avenue for a drive-by of Harlem and 125th Street. From there the motorcade crossed the Triborough Bridge onto the Grand Central Parkway; it passed the greenswards of Flushing Meadow Park—soon to host the 1964 New York World's Fair—and then turned south for the Van Wyck Expressway and Idlewild Airport, where Khrushchev's big Tupolev-114 was idling on the tarmac.³

Nikita Khrushchev's visit took place at the very apogee of American power and prestige in the world. The US economy was soaring, its share of global GDP close to its all-time peak of 40 percent. It was at that time, too, that the subjects of this book—Gilmore D. Clarke and Michael Rapuano—reached the very apex of their power and influence. On their hectic tour of Washington and New York, the Khrushchev family passed on, along, over, through, or by nearly two dozen places shaped by these extraordinary spatial designers: the Mount Vernon Memorial Highway, Reflecting Pool, and National Mall, with its hundreds of American elms, in Washington, DC; Riverside Park and the Henry Hudson Parkway; the Saw Mill River Parkway; Tibbetts Brook Park; the Taconic State Parkway; the largest of those “housing projects reared on the site of old



Nikita Khrushchev's limousine and motorcade on the Taconic State Parkway, September 1959. Photograph by Philip Clark. Collection of the author.

slums”—Stuyvesant Town and Peter Cooper Village; Battery Park; Central Park's Great Lawn; Thomas Jefferson Play Center and Mount Morris (Marcus Garvey) Park in Harlem; Randall's Island Park; the Grand Central Parkway and Van Wyck Expressway; Flushing Meadow Park; the UN Headquarters; Idlewild Airport.

Clarke and Rapuano were among the foremost shapers of the postwar metropolitan landscape in America. Landscape architects, site planners, urban designers, and civil engineers—they were vernal weavers of the modern motorway, master craftsmen of public parks and parkways for nearly fifty years. If influence be measured simply by the number of human lives touched by one's work, then that of Clarke and Rapuano is unparalleled in the twentieth century. Their

vast body of public landscapes is matched only by the succession of firms founded by Central Park's celebrated creators—Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux.⁴ If anything, the legacy of Clarke and Rapuano is more extensive—and certainly more complex. Though it may be comparing apples and asphalt, nearly twice as many people come to know the Henry Hudson Parkway each year than Central Park, however reluctantly or traffic-jammed.⁵ Effective inventors of the blacktop web that binds us still, Clarke and Rapuano helped make ours a nation of roads and motoring—for better and worse. They perfected the modern grade-separated, limited-access highway, an infrastructure that has made its way to nearly every continent on Earth. There is not a highway in the world today without the DNA of their trailblazing New York parkways of the



Bronx River Parkway, looking north to Fenimore Road overpass (demolished), ca. 1939. Westchester County Historical Society.

1920s—the Bronx River, Saw Mill River, Hutchinson River, and Taconic—scenic arterials that carried the Romantic ideal of the Olmsted park into the motor age. These were Central Park drawn out in long green tendrils across the land, “a kind of romantic bower,” as Marshall Berman put it, “in which modernism and pastoralism could intertwine.”⁶ Clarke even tutored Frederick Law Olmsted’s son on the finer points of parkway design. The latter’s May 1928 inquiry about super-elevated (banked) turns, pavement types, and surface finishing reveals just how novel high-speed motorway design was at the time. As Clarke explained to Olmsted Jr., super-elevation had been the subject of “considerable study on the part of our engineers” but no hard and fast rules had been established. He included in his letter a “table of banking” used on the Hutchinson River Parkway, then under construction, and confessed that resolving many such design details was a matter of trial and error in the field. “Naturally,” he allowed, “after we

have tried out this stretch of parkway we may alter our standard for banking.”⁷

The legacy of Clarke and Rapuano is epic in scale, breadth, and complexity. The men helped create some of the most scenic roads in America—the Henry Hudson Parkway, Taconic State Parkway, Skyline Drive, the Palisades Interstate and Garden State parkways; the Mount Vernon Memorial Highway and Colonial Parkway in Virginia. They designed scores of parks and playgrounds, planned botanical gardens and zoos, and laid out two world’s fairs, an Olympic sports complex in Montreal, the UN Headquarters, Shea Stadium, and John F. Kennedy Airport. They planned civic centers for downtown Brooklyn and Lower Manhattan, for Flint, Milwaukee, and Portland, Oregon. They improved Mammoth Hot Springs in Yellowstone National Park, were consultants on Jones Beach State Park, chose the sites of the Pentagon and CIA

TABLE OF BANKING

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RADIUS	CROSS GRADE	AMOUNT OF BANKING FOR WIDTH						
		20'	24'	27'	30'	36'	40'	54'
400	9.55	1.91	2.29	2.58	2.86	3.44	3.82	5.16
440	8.70	1.74	2.09	2.35	2.61	3.13	3.48	4.70
480	7.98	1.60	1.92	2.15	2.39	2.87	3.19	4.31
520	7.35	1.47	1.76	1.98	2.20	2.65	2.94	3.97
560	6.84	1.37	1.64	1.85	2.05	2.46	2.74	3.69
600	6.38	1.28	1.53	1.72	1.91	2.30	2.55	3.45
640	5.98	1.20	1.44	1.61	1.79	2.15	2.39	3.23
680	5.62	1.12	1.35	1.52	1.69	2.02	2.25	3.03
720	5.31	1.06	1.28	1.43	1.59	1.91	2.12	2.87
760	5.03	1.01	1.21	1.36	1.51	1.81	2.01	2.72
800	4.78	0.96	1.15	1.29	1.43	1.72	1.91	2.58
840	4.55	0.91	1.09	1.23	1.36	1.64	1.82	2.46
880	4.35	0.87	1.04	1.17	1.30	1.57	1.74	2.35
920	4.15	0.83	1.00	1.12	1.24	1.49	1.66	2.24
960	3.98	0.80	0.96	1.07	1.19	1.43	1.59	2.15
1000	3.82	0.76	0.92	1.03	1.15	1.38	1.53	2.06
1040	3.68	0.74	0.88	0.99	1.10	1.32	1.47	1.98
1080	3.53	0.71	0.85	0.95	1.06	1.27	1.41	1.91
1120	3.41	0.68	0.82	0.92	1.02	1.23	1.36	1.84
1200	3.19	0.64	0.77	0.86	0.96	1.15	1.28	1.72
1280	2.99	0.60	0.72	0.81	0.90	1.08	1.20	1.61
1360	2.81	0.56	0.67	0.76	0.84	1.01	1.12	1.52
1400	2.73	0.55	0.66	0.74	0.82	0.98	1.09	1.47
1440	2.65	0.53	0.64	0.72	0.79	0.95	1.06	1.43
1520	2.51	0.50	0.60	0.68	0.75	0.90	1.00	1.36
1600	2.39	0.48	0.57	0.65	0.72	0.86	0.96	1.29

Table of Banking used on the Hutchinson River Parkway, 1928. US Department of the Interior, National Park Service—Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site.

Headquarters, laid out Wolf Trap National Park for the Performing Arts, planned the National Institutes of Health complex in Bethesda, Maryland, expanded the grounds of West Point and the US Naval Academy, and master-planned a dozen parks and parkways for the Niagara Frontier State Park Commission. But Clarke and Rapuano also helped direct some of the first, largest, and most destructive Title I urban renewal projects in the United States—in Nashville, Brooklyn, Lower Manhattan, Cleveland, Bethlehem, and Scranton. The housing estates they site-planned in New York changed the very fabric of the city—Parkchester, Stuyvesant Town, Riverton, and Peter Cooper Village for the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company; the Harlem River Houses in Manhattan, first modern housing in the city for African Americans; the Vladeck and Ten Eyck (Williamsburg) houses, first of some sixty public housing projects Clarke and Rapuano planned for the New York City Housing Authority.

Indeed, nowhere is the legacy of Clarke and Rapuano more deeply inscribed than in the Big Apple. Throw a stone anywhere in this great metropolis and it will likely strike one of their works. If nothing else, it might come to rest on the paint-encrusted slats of the city's ubiquitous concrete-and-wood park benches, designed by Clarke for Playland in 1928; or hit the mottled bark of a London plane—a tree that Rapuano, like Xerxes of yore, fell in love with and helped make a New York City icon (its leaf has been the Parks Department's logo for ninety years). Much of this legacy was due to Clarke and Rapuano's extraordinary, half-century association with Gotham's divisive titan of public works, Robert Moses—theirs, writes Laurie Olin, was “one of the most fruitful collaborations in American design history.”⁸ Clarke and Moses met serendipitously on the banks of the Bronx River in 1917; their bond was immediate and lasting. In Clarke, Moses found his Alphonse—the brilliant landscape engineer who brought such beauty and



Gilmore D. Clarke (l) and Robert Moses at Ocho Rios, Jamaica, February 1957.
Collection of the author.

function to Paris under Prefect of the Seine Georges-Eugène Haussmann. Clarke was among the capable enablers who turned Moses's dreams into reality—"dreams of public works," writes Robert Caro, "on a scale that would dwarf any yet built in the cities of America."⁹ It was Clarke who gave Moses the asphalt yarn to achieve his "cherished ambition . . . to weave together the loose strands and frayed edges of New York's arterial and metropolitan tapestry."¹⁰ Moses regarded Clarke as "one of the foremost designers in the United States," as he put it to Governor Herbert H. Lehman, "if not in the world."¹¹ Decades later, in recommending Clarke to advise an effort to build a park on Jerusalem's Mount of Olives, Moses described his old associate as simply "the best man we have in this field."¹²

X

This was not idle flattery. Moses modeled his celebrated Long Island parks and parkways on those that Clarke created earlier in Westchester County—a public works triumph of the Jazz Age that was emulated as far afield as China and Australia. A decade later, in one of his first acts as Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia's park commissioner, Moses recruited Clarke to head the design division of the newly consolidated Department of Parks. Clarke in turn brought on Rapuano, his talented young aide-de-camp at the Westchester County Park Commission. Between 1934 and 1939, Clarke and Rapuano—assisted by several former Bronxville colleagues and gifted young men and women recruited from Cornell, Harvard, and the American Academy in Rome—helped Moses carry out a park renewal

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campaign unprecedented in American history. Along the way, Rapuano's studies of Renaissance and Baroque spatial design at the American Academy in Rome yielded a fresh aesthetic for the city—an Italianate idiom as well-suited for intensively used urban parks and playgrounds as Olmsted's Anglo-Romantic naturalism was for the city's larger open spaces. The two traditions often came together in splendid union—at Riverside Park, for example, where Olmsted's wooded slopes glide effortlessly down to Rapuano and Clinton Loyd's Romanesque terraces, ramped staircases, and ball courts lined with London planes. By 1939, the founding year of their partnership, Clarke and Rapuano had directed the planning, design, or major alteration of dozens of city parks—Bryant, Battery, City Hall, Carl Schurz, Sara Roosevelt, Marcus Garvey, Randall's Island, and the Conservatory Garden and Central Park Zoo; Pelham Bay and Orchard Beach parks in the Bronx; Jacob Riis Park and Forest Park in Queens; Staten Island's Silver Lake and Highland parks; Leif Ericson, Fort Greene, Dyker Beach, and Marine parks in Brooklyn. They helped lace great “ribbon parks with landscaped edges,” as Moses called them, about the city in the 1930s—the Belt, Grand Central, and Henry Hudson parkways. It was Rapuano's brainchild to tuck the Brooklyn–Queens Expressway beneath Brooklyn Heights on a stacked array of cantilevered decks, topped by the Brooklyn Heights Promenade, still among the city's most breathtaking public spaces.

By the time of Khrushchev's American tour, Clarke and Rapuano were a force in several fields—landscape architecture, city planning, and civil engineering. Like their architectural contemporaries Skidmore Owings and Merrill—co-founded by Rapuano's college classmate and lifelong friend, Nat Owings—they were handmaidens to American power. They advised governors and presidents, addressed senators and congressional committees. They were prized consultants to America's largest corporations; to the Defense Department, CIA, and National Institutes of Health; to the Bureau of Public Roads, National Park Service, American Battle Monuments Commission; to more than sixty elite colleges and universities; to urban redevelopment authorities and state agencies from coast to coast—including nearly all those chaired by Moses in the Empire State. And they were power brokers themselves. Clarke was tapped to be the first professor of city planning at Cornell University, where he taught a generation of students and later served as dean of the College of Architecture for over a decade. He played key roles advancing planning education at Harvard and MIT. He was granted an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters by Yale in 1940, was elected to the exclusive American

Academy of Arts and Letters, and was recognized for “notable public service” by the Municipal Art Society of New York—the first citation it ever awarded to an individual. Rapuano, who married into wealth, served as a trustee of the American Academy in Rome for many years. In 1958, he was named its sixth president (the first, ironically, of Italian ethnicity), a position he held for more than a decade. Clarke and Rapuano were both members of the Municipal Art Commission, the Century Association, the National Academy of Design. Both served on the US Fine Arts Commission, the instrumental body that considers all aesthetic matters related to Washington's monumental core. As commission chair for thirteen years, Clarke wielded near-veto authority over the very form and character of the nation's capital. He stood up even to presidents, rejecting Harry S. Truman's proposal to add a balcony to the White House.

Destiny tagged Clarke and Rapuano for careers in landscape architecture. Both spent their youths surrounded by green growing things, osmotically tutored in trees, plants, and flowers long before their formal educations. Though hardly manor-born, Clarke enjoyed a comfortable childhood in a family that helped found New York City's floral industry. And though Rapuano's family struggled when he was a child, he too benefited from a stable upbringing and often worked alongside his father—a landscape foreman with the city of Syracuse—as a teenager. Theirs are classic American success stories. Both Clarke and Rapuano were the first in their families to attend college—“first-gen” students in today's parlance; and both worked hard to make good on that privilege. They excelled at university, maturing as men and developing traits that made each the complement of the other. Like a good marriage, a successful professional partnership requires—among many other things—a certain complementarity of character, personality, and temperament. In this, Clarke and Rapuano were an ideal match. Clarke was formal and phlegmatic and somewhat wooden, but a gifted leader with a knack for management. Rapuano was a brilliant designer whose intuitive grasp of form and space made him one of the most respected landscape architects of his generation. He loved few things more than the scrum of the drafting room. If Clarke's chosen roost was the club or corner office, Rapuano preferred the studio, sleeves rolled up and pencil in hand, where he would sit at the drafting boards of junior staff to critique their work. Clarke was reserved and soft-spoken, tall and lean with a darkly handsome face; Rapuano was shorter, but—a college football player—well-built with film-star looks and a personality that could light up a room. Theirs calls to mind

one of the great partnerships of an earlier generation, of McKim, Mead, and White—especially the relationship between Charles Follen McKim and Stanford White. McKim was the cool academic classicist; White the creative dynamo who brought freshness and vitality to the relics of antiquity. Rapuano was no mean manager himself and oversaw much of the day-to-day operation of the firm; but he also found running things exhausting and turned down several opportunities for that reason (including chairing Harvard’s landscape architecture department). While both men were longtime Centurions—as members of New York’s prestigious Century Association are known—Rapuano considered it more a business expedience, while for Clarke club life was essential to his identity. He dined at the Century almost nightly and relished the company of its distinguished members. Rapuano preferred puttering about his Buck’s County farm, swapping the Brooks Brothers suit for matching khaki shirt and pants to walk his fields and check on his prize-winning herd of Ayrshire cows. Clarke, consummate Manhattanite with an Upper East Side apartment, hardly owned a toolbox. The men differed and converged in other ways as well. Beyond his love of Rome’s great churches, Rapuano was not especially religious. Clarke, on the other hand, was devout all his life, teaching Sunday school and serving as an elder and clerk of session at the Brick Presbyterian Church on Park Avenue, his place of worship for thirty years.¹³ They differed in their aesthetic inclinations as well, especially after World War II. The younger Rapuano was eager to explore abstract-expressionist design—best illustrated in his Ford Motor Company garden at the 1939 New York World’s Fair and the Voorhees Memorial Garden for Princeton University. Clarke was a dyed-in-the-wool classicist whose antipathy toward modern art and architecture grew increasingly extreme as he aged. He excoriated Frank Lloyd Wright’s Guggenheim Museum, hated the several proposed additions to the Boston Public Library, called Paul Rudolph’s Art and Architecture building at Yale a monstrosity, Le Corbusier’s recycled Carpenter Center at Harvard an “intrusive contraption” and the World Trade Center towers by Minoru Yamasaki—whom Clarke supervised as a fledgling architect in the 1930s—“ugly pieces of engineering.”¹⁴ His attacks on the avant-garde could be ruthless and searing. He accused Eero Saarinen of plagiarizing his Gateway Arch from a fascist monument that Mussolini planned to erect for the 1942 *Exposizione Universale*—a claim that critic Douglas Haskell called “the filthiest smear that has been attempted by a man highly placed in the architectural profession in our generation”—and claimed that William Pederson and Bradford Tilney filched their 1960 scheme for the Franklin

D. Roosevelt memorial from Mathias Goeritz’s *Torres de Satélite* in Mexico City.¹⁵

These railings were often peevish, and occasionally backfired. He wrote letters of protest to Cornell when a jukebox was installed in the student union (lamenting that “such instruments” were not yet “outlawed in a normal, well-ordered society,”) and voted repeatedly to deny Century Association membership to abstract expressionists.¹⁶ After complaining that he was forced to see Louise Nevelson’s *Night Presence IV* across Fifth Avenue from his table at the Metropolitan Club dining room—an “insult to every citizen forced to gaze upon it”—the Parks Department had the big COR-TEN sculpture moved. Clarke had cynically suggested the piece might do well in the monkey house at the Bronx Zoo, where the animals would endow it with a “handsome patina . . . given time.”¹⁷ But Clarke’s gloating was doused a few Sundays later, when he discovered that *Night Presence IV* had been placed—quite deliberately—on the Park Avenue Mall across from his Brick Church.¹⁸ Then there was Gordon Bunshaft’s circular museum to house Joseph H. Hirshhorn’s donated collection of contemporary art in Washington, DC. Clarke considered Hirshhorn, a self-made Latvian immigrant, a swindler and charlatan and his museum’s placement on the National Mall a sacrilege—a position, one suspects, more than a little colored by antisemitism. Clarke was complex, however, and his biases inconsistent. This was, after all, a man who helped usher in the motor age, who created infrastructure for that most epoch-making of modern affordances—the automobile. He seconded a proposal by Philip Johnson to admit Louis Kahn, a modernist and a Jew, to the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and became lifelong friends with legendary Cornell classicist Harry Caplan, a man he initially called “a Jew, but charming.” A true bigot would likely not have chosen to partner with the son of Southern Italian immigrants, however talented; nor remain lifelong friends with Japanese designer Takuma Tono, the first Asian graduate of Cornell’s landscape architecture program; nor repeatedly defend in the press Robert Moses, a Jew; nor come to the aid of a gay former classmate, Edward G. Lawson, who was forced to quit the Cornell faculty in 1943 after receiving “obscene” material in the mail.¹⁹ And while Clarke’s opposition to the Johnson Museum of Art at Cornell led him to say harsh things about its architect, I. M. Pei, he was a close friend of Hu Shih, the great Chinese diplomat and philosopher whom Clarke befriended as an undergraduate (and sponsored for Century membership). And while Clarke was a Republican, he was against the Vietnam War and so loathed Richard Nixon that he penned a sonnet to his crimes.

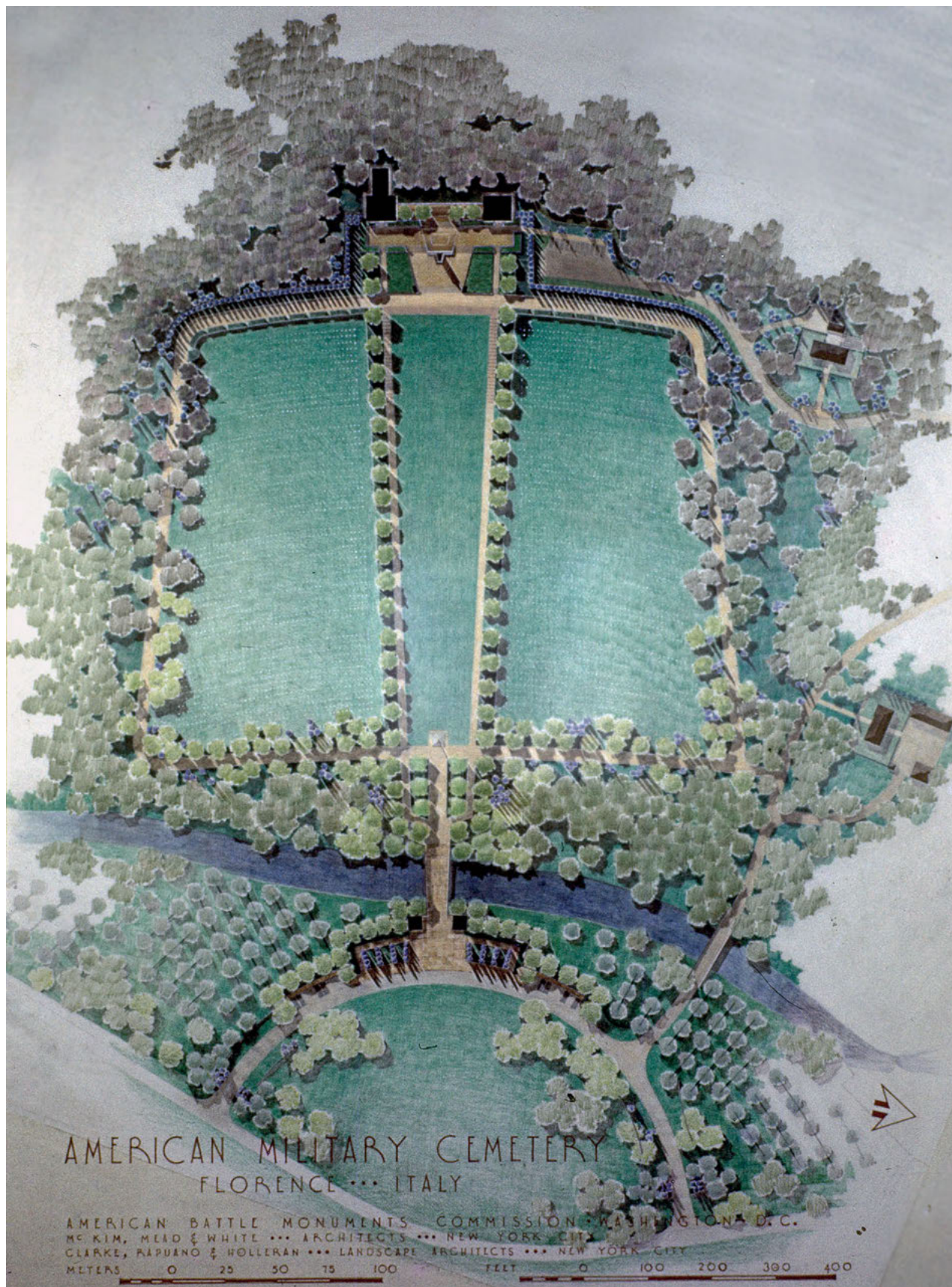
A riddle sits at the heart of the Clarke and Rapuano story: if these men were so important, if they were such monumental figures in the fields of landscape architecture and urban planning for much of the twentieth century, how is it that they are almost wholly forgotten today? Why have these extraordinarily prolific shapers of the civic realm, whose works are known to millions, so obscure—even to scholars and practitioners in the very fields they dominated? Clarke and Rapuano were heirs to the Olmsted legacy; yet while there are a dozen books on the designer of Central Park, very little has been written about these men. It is a colossal gap in the historiography of twentieth-century American urbanism and landscape architecture. Of course, Birnbaum and Karson's compendium, *Pioneers of American Landscape Design* (2000), includes entries on both Clarke and Rapuano.²⁰ Geoffrey and Susan Jellicoe's *Landscape of Man* (1975) highlights their major contributions, as does Norman T. Newton's *Design on the Land: The Development of Landscape Architecture* (1971). Robert Caro's monumental biography of Robert Moses, *The Power Broker*, gives Clarke something of his due, even if in passing. The author conducted several interviews with Clarke, then an octogenarian, and refers to him in one passage as "the most famous landscape architect in the United States."²¹ Ballon and Jackson's anthology on New York in the twentieth century—*Robert Moses and the Modern City: The Transformation of New York* (2007)—is the only text that brings the work of Clarke and Rapuano into sufficient light. Elsewhere we come across Clarke and Rapuano only incidentally, in books about various projects they were part of: John F. Kennedy Airport; the Bronx River Parkway; urban renewal and housing projects like Parkchester and Stuyvesant Town; the UN Headquarters complex; New York's world's fairs; the Pentagon and CIA headquarters; planning for a new Dodger stadium in Brooklyn.²² And while a handful of older works cover well the design theory of the early motor parkways—most notably Sigfried Giedion's *Space, Time and Architecture* (1941) and Christopher Tunnard and Boris Pushkarev's 1963 classic *Man-Made America: Chaos or Control?*—the men who pioneered the first modern highways are hardly named.

There are several explanations for this. First, Clarke and Rapuano specialized in public works projects of great scale and complexity, collaborative efforts that involved dozens of other planning, design, and engineering professionals. Assigning "authorship" for a major infrastructure project—identifying the germinal agents, according precise creative attribution—is a challenge, especially when a colossal figure like Moses is in the frame. It was easy for a harried reporter

or journalist to be drawn into the gravitational field of a top executive—Moses in New York, Ed Bacon in Philadelphia, Le Corbusier on the UN Headquarters—rather than dig down and dissect the contributions of numerous consultants. Even *design* credit for a particular park or housing estate would often be simply attributed to the man at the top of the flowchart. Thus are the New York City parks and parkways Clarke and Rapuano were largely responsible for designing often regarded as Moses's works alone. And while it is not inaccurate to describe Riverside Park or the Henry Hudson Parkway as "Moses projects," doing so encourages a Great Man mindset that strips history of its nuance, richness, and diversity. Moses understood well that a top-flight design and engineering corps was essential to getting things done. "[W]ithout the experts and engineers we would not get anywhere," he said in a 1936 speech; "They do most of the work and they get very little of the credit."²³ Of course, it was Moses himself—a man of enormous ego—who often failed in this. As Clarke's widow Dolores related to me, Clarke would be quietly enraged at dinner parties or other functions as Moses began boasting of having designed this park or that parkway.

Clarke and Rapuano's contributions have also been obscured by the fact that their own expertise spanned several professional fields. The catholic nature of the Clarke and Rapuano practice makes categorizing its prodigious output a challenge. On any given project the firm could be responsible for the overall master plan, site grading, utility and planting plans, siting and orientation of buildings, engineering roads and bridges, and managing construction and the project as a whole. Clarke and Rapuano considered themselves landscape architects first and foremost, but theirs was an interdisciplinary practice from the start and became more so with time—tackling in-house multiple facets of planning, design, engineering, construction, and project management. The fifty-four men and women on payroll in 1954 included nineteen draftsmen, ten civil engineers, six architects, five site planners, and a clerical pool of nine. In a 1957 letter to Philip N. Youtz at the University of Michigan, Clarke explained the "nature of our professional practice":

We found that the engineering part of the work that we undertake is so closely interwoven with landscape and planning . . . that the two must be developed together. For example, we have been engaged in the design of parkways and expressways for many years and we find that the aesthetic requirements of these large projects are so closely related to the engineering requirements that . . . both phases of these projects are best undertaken in a single office.



Clarke, Rapuano & Holleran and McKim, Mead & White for the American Battle Monuments Commission, *American Military Cemetery—Florence, Italy*, 1948. Collection of Domenico Annese.

Projects were generally initiated within the firm's "design group," he continued, then "sent to the engineer for the development of the plans into contract documents, including estimates of cost and specifications. In this . . . the designers keep in close touch with the engineers so as to be assured that nothing is sacrificed in design unless it is essential for good and sufficient reasons." That said, the firm's roots were clear and firmly planted; "we like to have people," Clarke stressed, "think of us first as landscape architects."²⁴

But as the world grew increasingly specialized in the postwar era, the comprehensive, jack-of-all-trades nature of the Clarke and Rapuano practice—the key to its enormous success (the firm billed close to \$900,000 in 1953, about \$10 million today)—reduced its presence in any one area. This had the ironic effect of dissociating Clarke and Rapuano from their field of first allegiance, especially as the scope of landscape architecture itself contracted in midcentury—as emerging professions like urban design, highway engineering, and city and regional planning absorbed areas of practice once within its ambit. To engineers, Clarke and Rapuano were "landscapers"; to architects, they were planners; to landscape architects, they were engineers. It was as if the ambition of an entire profession had shrunk to the scale of a backyard. Not until the environmental revolution led by Ian McHarg would its scope of vision open in scale and ambition again. This attenuation of the profession is evident in books on landscape architecture published in the postwar era. American work featured in Peter Shepheard's 1953 global survey, *Modern Gardens*, is limited to a handful of West Coast gardens and a small walled garden in Newport by Tunnard. Needless to say, Clarke and Rapuano make no appearance. Nor are they mentioned in Elizabeth B. Kassler's more comprehensive *Modern Gardens and the Landscape* (1964), though the Taconic State Parkway—its "concrete ribbons . . . less an interruption of the landscape than an affirmation of its topography"—is well praised in passing. In the expansive scope of their practice, Clarke and Rapuano were far ahead of their time, setting precedent for land-planning megafirms like SWA Group, Sasaki, Gensler, and the late EDAW—a corporate behemoth ("the Starbucks of landscape architecture") that was eaten in turn by an even bigger fish, AECOM.²⁵

A related parallel factor in the "disappearing" of Clarke and Rapuano was the extraordinary rise of modernism in the middle decades of the twentieth century. Clarke and Rapuano were educated in the hoary Beaux-Arts tradition; and Clarke, especially, remained committed to the classical

ideal all his life. They were, in a sense, last of a breed; for by the end of World War II most leading schools of architecture and city planning in the United States had turned to modernism and away from the design pedagogy of the past. The so-called "Country Place" generation was especially out of fashion, their work dismissed as ossified and elitist. But the public works baby was tossed out with the classical bathwater. Clarke and Rapuano indeed looked to the past for inspiration—the Anglo-Olmstedian picturesque tradition in Clarke's case, evident in his early parkways; the Italian Renaissance in Rapuano's. But they were only superficially conservative, only tangentially part of the *ancien regime*. Nonetheless, cultural winds were shifting, and not in Clarke and Rapuano's direction; for it hardly helped that these men were politically conservative and voted Republican all their lives. Hard as it is to imagine now, the creative worlds Clarke and Rapuano moved in—academia and the Ivy League, the design and planning professions, learned and philanthropic societies, the New York art establishment—were not the liberal-progressive bastions they are today. Columbia University was led by a former Army general and future Republican president, after all. But the tectonic shifts of the 1960s changed everything, toppling the status quo in nearly every corner of society. By decade's end Clarke and Rapuano were men out of favor and out of time, estranged from a world they shaped. Neither would likely feel very welcome today at Cornell or the American Academy in Rome—institutions they once led.

These shifting cultural winds help explain a yawning lacuna in the scholarship on twentieth-century American landscape architecture into which Clarke and Rapuano have fallen. Until recently, most serious books on the subject have focused on one of two areas: the Country Place era of the century's first decades, and the modernism born in opposition to that legacy, led initially by a trio of Harvard landscape architecture students in the 1930s—Garrett Eckbo, James Rose, and Dan Kiley. The young men rejected the program's old curricular binary of Olmsted pastoralism and Beaux-Arts axiality, both of which seemed especially stale against the modernist thrust of the newly formed Graduate School of Design. "How could landscape architecture relate to the exciting developments in modern art?" they wondered; "What was the relationship of their design efforts to society? And what was the appropriate aesthetic for the pressing needs of the day?"²⁶ They were not alone. Thomas D. Church and Fletcher Steele drew upon their exposure to European modernism and cubism to generate new garden forms. Christopher Tunnard was inspired by the Constructivist Movement. "We are faced," he wrote in a 1938 treatise, "with the task of creating a new landscape



Brooklyn-Queens Expressway at Brooklyn Heights, ca. 1968. Clarke & Rapuano Landscape Architecture Collection, New-York Historical Society.

for the twentieth century.”²⁷ Landscape modernism appealed to that yearning to reinvent the world that every generation undergoes (or should), imbued with modernism’s implicit promise to create a more just and equitable future out of the ashes of history—a seductive thing indeed for a world that had endured two wars, a global depression, and the Holocaust. “The production of a modernist sensibility in American landscape architecture,” writes Marc Treib, “depended to a great degree on the belief that like the other arts, it should develop in accord with the social and technological conditions of contemporary life.”²⁸

But all this played out rather differently on the ground; for despite the freshness and innovation the early landscape modernists brought to the field, most of its practitioners (Kiley excepted) spent their careers creating private sanctuaries for a privileged elite. Their gardens may have drawn upon the progressive aesthetics of cubism and abstract expressionism, but the result was just as exclusive, just as shorn of social mission as the formal gardens of their Gilded Age forebears. The irony here is that while Clarke and Rapuano resisted modernism per se, their work was thoroughly modern in a deeper, more vital sense. These were men who embraced the paramount technological innovation of their generation, who created the first major landscapes of the motor age. This, it seems, was a more authentically progressive engagement of the zeitgeist than crafting cubist gardens for California sybarites. The essential modernity of such infrastructure was not lost on Giedion. As he put it in *Space, Time and Architecture*, “The American parkways as they have developed since the nineteen twenties—coincident, by the way, with the flowering of contemporary architecture in Europe—reveal in their whole treatment the fact that they are already one of the elements of the contemporary town, one of those born out of the vision of our period.”²⁹ Moreover, Clarke and Rapuano’s lifelong dedication to civic work helped restore the founding values of the American landscape architectural profession—that commitment to progressive social reform, to making places for the people, that drove the Olmsted era but was greatly diminished in the Gilded Age.

Between these well-studied poles—there are over a dozen published works on the Country Place era and landscape architectural modernism—was the watershed of the Great Depression.³⁰ The years between about 1925 and World War II witnessed a heroic and extraordinary flowering of public-spirited placemaking. Sustained by the New Deal—the “silver lining of the Great Depression,” as Moses called it—this largely forgotten generation of designers forged a legacy of public works that touched the lives of millions

and continues to do so today. And yet it remains almost virgin scholarly terrain; the number of books on the subject can literally be counted on one hand.³¹

In the planning academy, the vast “slum clearance” and urban expressway work that Clarke and Rapuano were so deeply involved with in the postwar era hardly endeared them to a generation of equity-minded advocacy planners. After World War II, American cities—especially older industrial cities in the Northeast and Midwest—struggled to replace their horrendously substandard housing stock. Title I of the 1949 Housing Act made it economically feasible to do so, enabling cities to condemn “blighted” properties for redevelopment, with Washington, DC, paying up to two-thirds of costs. In city after city, well-intentioned but fatally flawed redevelopment schemes were drafted to upgrade America’s aging urban fabric—to eliminate, especially, those slums adjacent to downtown that one official called the “dirty collar” around the central business district.³² The “federal bulldozer” unleashed a juggernaut of destruction that gutted neighborhoods and displaced tens of thousands of families—so many of whom were African American that urban renewal became known as “Negro removal.” The grimmest sort of modernist superblock architecture replaced what was razed, if anything was built at all (many cities—Buffalo, Syracuse, Newark, Detroit, Durham—were left with acres of empty lots after renewal plans fell through). Then came the backlash, spurred by Jane Jacobs’s 1961 shot across the bow, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*; in city after city, protests led to the cancellation of dozens of urban renewal and expressway projects. The American planning profession itself underwent a transformation, now distancing itself from the fields from which it hatched—architecture, landscape architecture, and physical planning—and turning instead to the social sciences. This brought about an almost Oedipal rejection of the muscular “Make No Little Plans” sort of planning that defined the profession since the days of Daniel Burnham. Planners had found plentiful and lucrative work with urban redevelopment authorities; Clarke and Rapuano were no exception. They were pioneers who not only planned the first and largest Title I slum clearance projects in the United States, but snaked miles of asphalt through crowded, hardscrabble neighborhoods that were nonetheless vital communities with traditions and cultures all their own.

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Marga Rogers and Michael Reid Rapuano in October 2009 unpacking their father's drawings, stored for decades in a Newtown, Pennsylvania, attic. Photograph by the author.

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Upper West Side of Manhattan and Central Park. From Matthew Dripps, *Plan of New York City*, 1867. New York Public Library.