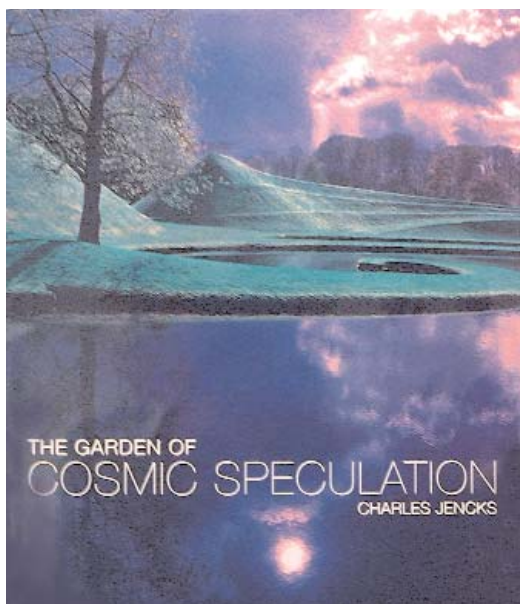


# The Garden of Cosmic Speculation

Charles Jencks



This book tells the story of one of the most original and important gardens of the 21st century, created by the internationally celebrated architectural critic and designer Charles Jencks. He and his late wife started working on a landscape, that, after her death in 1995, continued to grow into a larger project, an ongoing speculation on the basic elements of nature.

Covering thirty acres in the Borders area of Scotland, the Garden of Cosmic Speculation is conceived as a place to explore certain fundamental aspects of the universe. What are atoms made of and how should we conceive of them? How does DNA make up a living organism and why is it essential to celebrate it in a garden? In dialogue with eminent physicists, cosmologists, and biologists, including Paul Davies, Lee Smolin, and Steven Rose, Charles Jencks has created a series of new, expansive, visual metaphors that challenge misleading and frequently misunderstood concepts, such as the "Big Bang" and the "Selfish Gene."

The garden uses nature to celebrate nature, both intellectually and through the senses, including the sense of humor. What emerges is a new language of landscape design based on twists and waves, optical illusions, and sudden surprises. It presents a view of the universe quite different from the standard mechanistic model; the complexity sciences show it to be more dynamic and creative than previously conceived.

The garden abstracts this new world view. A water cascade of steps recounts the story of the universe, a terrace shows the distortion of space and time caused by a black hole, a "Quark Walk" takes the visitor on a journey to the smallest building blocks of matter, and a series of sweeping landforms and lakes recall fractal geometry while echoing visually the nearby Scottish hills.

Witty, unusual, and questioning, the Garden of Cosmic Speculation is full of ideas and games, associations and memories. Jencks weaves together his personal account of the garden's creation and an investigation into the revelations of recent science, using landscape and design to shed light on the new ways we can now conceive of the universe.

"Charles Jencks has a rare insight into nature's patterns – the microworld of atoms and DNA, and the cosmic architecture of galaxies, black holes, and the 'Big Bang.' He has brought his insights literally to life by creating a marvelous garden."

**Sir Martin Rees, Astronomer Royal**

"Exploring the Garden of Cosmic Speculation is a magical experience comparable to wandering the grounds of Stowe. Its coming into existence is here wonderfully described by its creator, Charles Jencks."

**Professor James Watson,  
Co-discoverer of DNA**

"An adventurous and personal journey through time and space. Charles Jencks is the Facteur Cheval of the Palais Ideal of cosmology. This book is a must for anyone who would cultivate their own garden."

**Daniel Libeskind, Architect**

"The inspirational ideas put forward by this book provide us with a contemporary response to the age-old conflict between Art and Nature. The extraordinary garden is not only a feast for the eyes but, as an embodiment of the ideas explained in this book, it stimulates our intellectual curiosity."

**Arabella Lennox-Boyd,  
Landscape and Architectural Designer**

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