

**SKETCH FOR GREEN**  
UDO DAGENBACH

*Curiosity  
is the currency of luck.*

*Udo Dagenbach*

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## FROM MY SKETCHBOOKS

Udo Dagenbach

Sketching is a very individual way to express your ideas.

It always shows your vision. If you look back on the drawings you have done over a long period, you recognize a kind of common thread that links all the designs and ideas.

In 2017, I decided to review all my sketches done from around 1974 until now and present a selection of them in a book.

It seems that the technical standard of digital drawing pencils has meanwhile reached such a high standard, that they will replace analog drawings very soon.

Therefore, I see my drawings as relics of a dying work method.

I always refused to draw with the mouse, as I regarded it as a very strange and unsatisfying instrument. The connection between hand and brain was not as it should be. For hundreds of thousands of years mankind relied on its ability to shape its environment with its hands—developing analog tools as extended hands—but still depending on a good hand-brain coordination. The mouse has always lacked this connection.

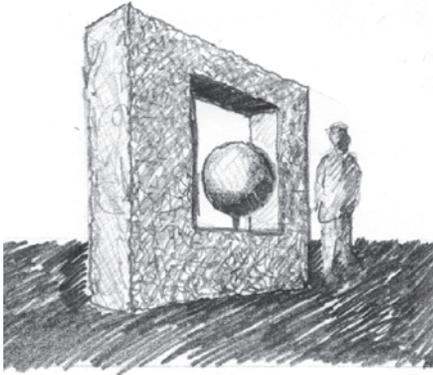
With the modern pencil tools we can return to the analog structure of our archaic abilities, and yet advance to the incredible new chances the digital world is providing for our creative work.

I have never regarded my drawings as an art in itself—my drawings are expressions of ideas I intend to realize somewhere in the landscape, or they show how I read landscape and transform it into a sketch.

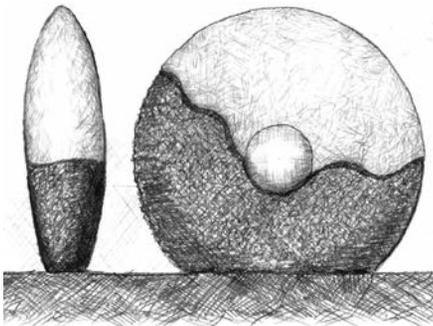
For 40 years I have been working in the field of landscaping, and for 30 years I have been working with gläser und dagenbach landscape architects in Berlin. As you can imagine, lots of ideas, projects, competitions have been done during this time. Many of them have not been realized or chosen to be awarded in a competition.

So they disappear unpublished, although many of them are worth being presented. In a regular project, process sketches are often only the first steps, which later are processed into renderings, animations developed with Photoshop.

The process of design is hardly ever completely documented. Nobody shows a false design path, which could have been interesting in another project.



Plant Sculpture Cat. 15. Var. 4



Flying Stone Discus Cat. 27

### Material and Surface

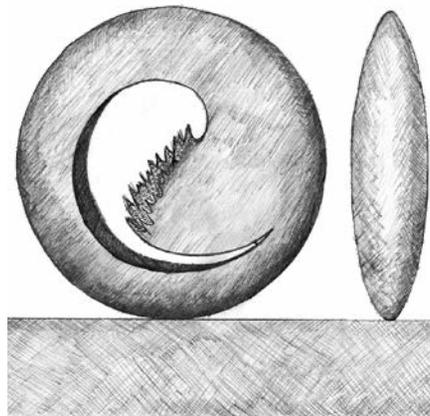
The organic and inorganic, plants and stone: these are the two basic materials of both landscape architects and sculptors. Whether in the overall plan or the individual aesthetic elements, Dagenbach brings the two into relationship in extraordinarily diverse ways. The art of sculpture and landscaping

come together in the shaping of plants: in *Ars topiaria*. Hornbeam, privet, yew, box, hawthorn, and other woods are shaped into cubic gates, open cubes and discs, spheres, and ellipses, even into dynamic, torch-like objects, all captured in inspired designs (Cat. 15. Var. 1-4, 6-9, 11-13, p. 54-64).

In addition to that—and this is Dagenbach's very own idea—plants and stone are brought together to form a single object, usually in the shape of simple geometrical figures, such as cubes, spheres, and cones (Cat. 19-23, 26-27, p. 70-77 and 82-85). The plant, in being cut to shape, meets the stone, and conversely, the stone meets the plant, by, for instance, ridging its surface in order to bring it to life.

The viewer's eye is particularly drawn to the meeting point of the two different materials and surfaces: here, both in the sketches and the numerous realizations of such objects, the strength of the external form (Cat. 19, 21, 26, p. 70-71, 73, 82-83) may be even further brought to life by, as in *Flying Stone Discus*, adding a bronze core (Cat. 27, p. 85). However, even when the rigor of the organic-inorganic shape is maintained, and the form changed in terms of material (Cat. 20, 22, 23, p. 72, 74-77), what remains constant is the charm of these unusual compositions.

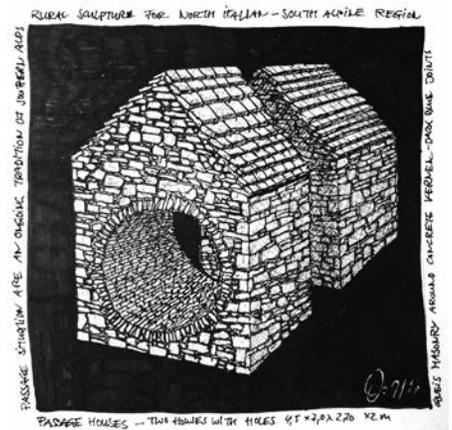
The softly flowing shape frames the inner hollows, or recesses, while the towering double sculpture's outer contours correspond fascinatingly with the enclosed negative spaces. Such transparent art works enable the light and the surroundings to enter into dialogue with one another. The empty space is also an important design element in the strictly geometric works, particularly richly varied in the *Plant Sculptures* (Cat. 15. Var. 1-4, 6-9, p. 54-57, 58-61). Likewise, the *Gneissic Rock Houses* (Cat. 34. Var. 1, p. 96), where Dagenbach recalls the characteristic local stone traditionally used in houses in the southern Alps, surround a circular void: the design for a rural sculpture, still unrealized, shows the classical house shape, a cube with a pitched roof, made from traditional gneiss,



Inverse Wave Cat. 12

framing a wide, tunnel-like opening, stretching from front to back.

The Japanese artist Isamu Noguchi (1904-1988) was a major influence on Dagenbach's connecting of sculpture and landscape architecture. Noguchi's artistic achievement was transgressive, in both its combining of Eastern and Western traditions and of diverse artistic genres: he melded artistic disciplines and influences from Japan with those of the Western world to create new artistic spaces, whether public squares, parks and gardens, or stage sets, such as those for Martha Graham, the American dancer and choreographer. Noguchi began as a sculptor. In the late 1920's, he worked as a choreographer at Constantin Brâncuși's (1876-1957) studio in Paris. With his rigorous simplification of form, its re-



Gneissic Rock Houses Cat 34.1

## **In Conclusion**

This book gives an overview of the diversity, the wealth of invention, and fantasy of a prolific graphic output, product of a masterful drawing technique, practiced and perfected over many years: in the main a matter of gardens, parks, and their individual elements—the head and hand of the draughtsman engaged with the vitality of nature.

The technique of ‘drawing’, once purely manual, is being increasingly supplemented by digital aids. A great deal becomes easier and faster to realize: if you think, for example, of functions such as the automatic filling and coloring of areas, or working on several layers, or the enormous choice of pens and brushes, etc., or lastly, the speed of editing and sharing. That makes the professional’s work much easier, without essentially influencing the generation of ideas or the style of visual expression in the process of drawing.

This book presents the output of the analog draughtsman Dagenbach’s up to the present. It gives us reason to hope that many more ideas, both big and small, will find expression, whether on paper or on the screen.



|                             |  |
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