

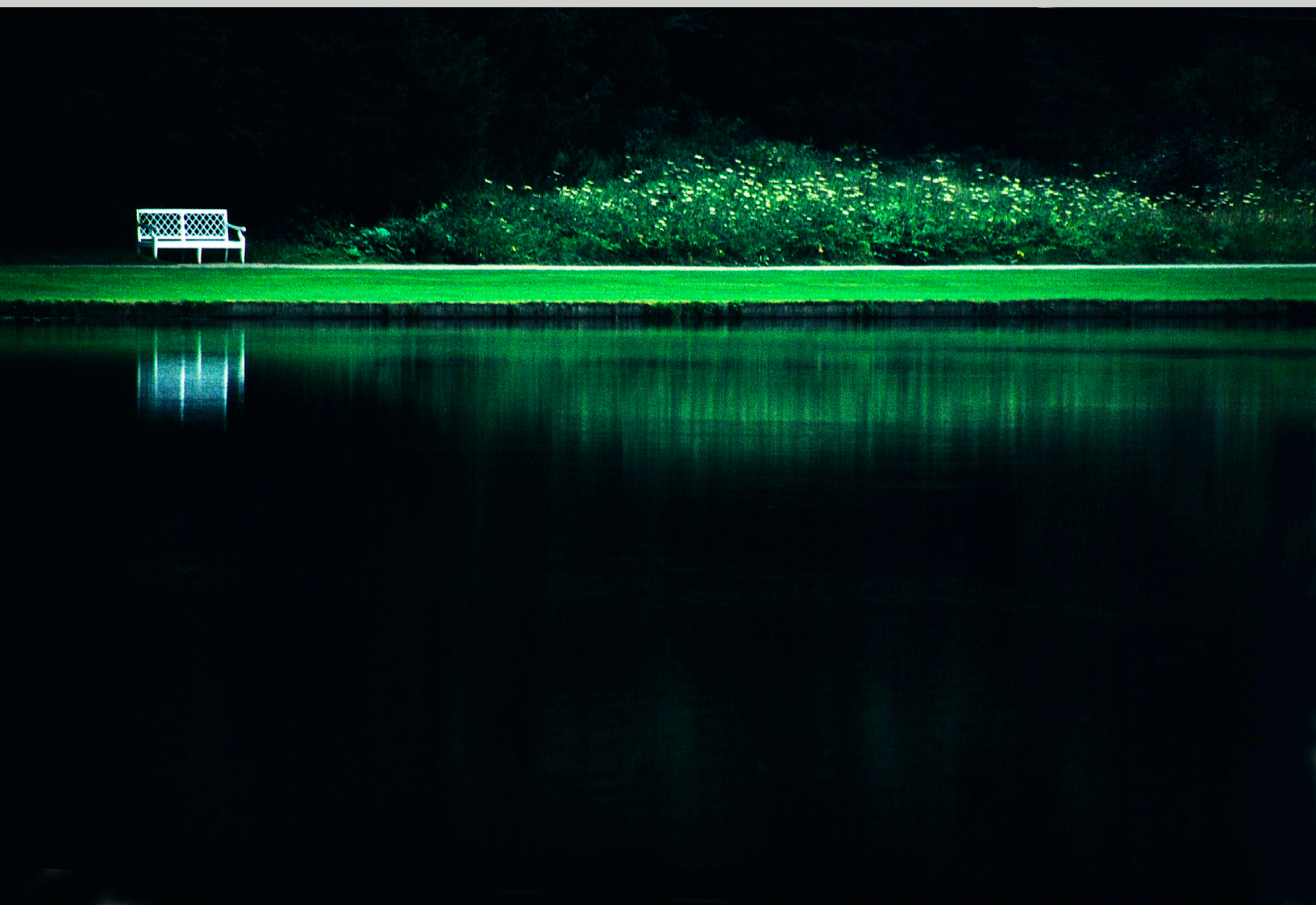
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This water has a calming effect on almost everything. The flatness, the extent and reflectivity are practically numbing. At the least, there is a real invitation to sit down and pause.

Stourhead House
Stourton, Wiltshire, England



Fences can be a form of guardrail, but when they are crafted this beautifully almost no one cares that this fence is a safety device.

*Villa Farnese
Caprarolo, Italy*



If you have lots of money you can have lots of water in your gardens. Abalone shells decorate the perimeter of this pool. Obviously not intended for swimming, but the color of the water says there is need for maintenance.

Lotusland
Montecito, California



The color of water tells us the stories we have already told ourselves. Clarity, movement, shine, turbulence. We expect a lot from water and it is because it is part of us. It is the most precise separator of earth and sky. It seems impossible but the printed color of this lake is true and accurate. It is flat and non-reflective because it is loaded with glacial silt (flour) from the Southern Alps.

*Lake Pukaki,
South Island, New Zealand*



The serenity water provides in a garden is often associated with wealth and grand estates of another time, and yet, little puddles in the gutter still fascinate children and even adults, if they take the trouble to look. Green is great but green with wet is the greatest.

Stourhead House
Stourton, Wiltshire, England



Here is the whole catastrophe. Everything at once and in what seems to be a water garden. The average depth of San Francisco Bay is ten feet. In spite of its reputation on tourist posters, it is really only a puddle. A lot of people are trying to take care of it, but when you get your tires changed try to remember that 40,000 tons of rubber from those tires washes into the bay each year. No one fishes in the South Bay any more.

Salt ponds, corporate buildings, shipping, yachting, housing, and an estuary.
South San Francisco Bay



Most garden fountains simply die for lack of maintenance. Water requires more tending than plants because plumbing, either leaks or it doesn't. There is no margin. We clean up gardens the way we paint a house. It won't last long, but maybe it will last long enough. Gardens almost never look the way we think they should.

*Pegasus Fountain, Villa Farnese
Caprarolo, Italy*



Water in gardens and especially in cities and plazas seem evidence of civic pride or the ultimate in flamboyance and hubris. Long ago this pond and island were the scene of stupendous displays and theatrics for the enjoyment of the Emperor and his retinue.

*Circus, Hadrian's Villa
Tivoli, Italy*



Water in the garden plays many roles. It shows us the sky when we are not looking for it. And because the sky is the darkest overhead, reflections have more density. This image is intentionally upside down because it looks better that way. Reflections have a way of turning us around.

*Villa Lante,
Bagnaia, Italy*



All the water, in every garden, is an attempt to recall something from our deep amphibious past. Moving water is arguably the most calming of all noises. It is what Chopin was probably searching for when he wrote his 'Nocturnes.' Not making the sound of running water, but producing the same result.

*Yosemite National Park
California*



Broken slate as a ground cover around a collection of cactus lets us know a theater set designer was involved here rather than a desert ecologist. Cacti and succulents are plants we don't seem to know what to do with. Their spiky danger makes us set them apart. They become objects, things seldom relating to the surroundings because they are so often out of context. The desert is the antithesis of the dominant European idea of the garden.

Lotusland

Montecito, California



"I have set this portion of my courtyard to display my collection of Cactus. Aren't they lovely?" No, in fact, they look like bad children, told to line up and be quiet. This is just left over space decorated with plants because nothing else came to mind. It was just easy.

*Cactus (Garden?) Former Villa, now a cluster of shops
Arequipa, Peru*



When desert water comes in the form of snow it often sublimates into the air and barely moistens the plants. The water only licks the land or runs off, as if to tease, never promising to satisfy. This is a powerful and memorable place. Enormous forms and infinite sky. It is wonderful in its own way, but it is not a green garden.

*Volcanic rill
Shiprock, New Mexico*



(Almost) The closest we ever get to gardens in arid regions is agriculture. Agriculture because of irrigation and like the Anasazi, the agriculture will disappear as soon as the water goes away. The real garden here is the sky and the stones in the distance. A circumstantial Western American version of the meditation garden at Ryoanji.

*Near the back side of Bryce Canyon
Southern Utah*