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Dan Kiley, Influential Landscape Architect, Dies at 91

By Douglas Martin

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Dan Kiley, a seminal landscape architect who combined modernist functionalism with classical design principles in more than 1,000 projects, died on Saturday at his home in Charlotte, Vt. He was 91.

His son-in-law, David Holmes, said that death occurred after a period of declining health, but that he had continued to work until last summer.

Mr. Kiley's many notable projects, often done with the great architects of his time, included the Gateway Arch in St. Louis, where he worked with Eero Saarinen; the Ford Foundation's headquarters and Lincoln Center in Manhattan; and I. M. Pei's East Building, inside and out, for the National Gallery of Art in Washington.

Other projects whose settings he enhanced included the John F. Kennedy Library in Boston; the Air Force Academy in Colorado; Rockefeller University in Manhattan, with its exquisite Scholar Garden; Dulles International Airport in Northern Virginia; the main pedestrian center of La Défense in Paris; and the four-acre Fountain Place in downtown Dallas.

Ken Smith, a landscape architect known for his own idiosyncratic modernism, said in an interview yesterday that Mr. Kiley inspired generations of landscape architects. "He took modernism to the level of classical form," Mr. Smith said. "Everything seemed perfectly resolved."

Peter E. Walker, the landscape architect who is working on the World Trade Center memorial, said Mr. Kiley was an elegant artist who cleverly rethought classical French garden design. In particular, Mr. Walker recalled the garden that Mr. Kiley did in Columbus, Ind., for J. Irwin Miller, a manufacturer. A canopy of trees appears to extend the house into the distant landscape.

"For many of us, that was where modernism began," Mr. Walker said.

Kevin Roche, the architect, who worked with Mr. Saarinen on the Miller house, said yesterday that he considered Mr. Kiley "the most distinguished landscape architect of the 20th century."

Mr. Kiley's innovations included taking classical forms like hedges and allées and arranging them in unexpected patterns, using unlikely plants like beds of ferns and sometimes employing fine materials like marble where others might have used concrete.

He derived inspiration from sources as diverse as Ralph Waldo Emerson's philosophy and William Blake's visionary poetry. He once wrote that the greatest contribution a designer could make was to "link the human and the natural in such a way as to recall our fundamental place in the scheme of things."

Daniel Urban Kiley was born on Sept. 2, 1912, in Boston. His family did not have much money, and his idea of a date was to take his girlfriend to the Arnold Arboretum, in Boston, *The New Yorker* reported in 1995. Caddying on weekends sparked an interest in golf-course design, so he started reading books about landscape architecture.

After graduating from high school in 1930, Mr. Kiley became an unpaid apprentice with Warren H. Manning, who had been an associate of Frederick Law Olmsted, one of the designers of Central Park, among many American landmarks. Mr. Manning, was a founder of the American Society of Landscape Architects, along with Mr. Olmsted's sons.

"He gave me two pieces of advice," Mr. Kiley said in an interview with *The New York Times* in 2000. "Not to join the society and not to go to Harvard." He never joined the society, but he became a part-time student at the Graduate School of Design at Harvard and stayed for two years while continuing to work for Mr. Manning 30 hours a week.

Along with two other students, James Rose and Garrett Eckbo, who were also bored with "the dry symmetries of the Beaux-Arts," he wrote a series of articles for the journal *Architectural Record* that called for a new kind of landscape architecture, a functional one that answered the needs of people in cities and suburbs, while paying attention to the harmonies of nature.

Mr. Kiley had planned to return to Mr. Manning's office as partner, but Mr. Manning died in 1938. Mr. Kiley left Harvard without a degree and went to Washington, where he worked with the early modernist Louis Kahn on housing projects. Mr. Smith, who has studied his drawings from this period, said Mr. Kiley did a different design for a different house each day.

During World War II, Mr. Kiley served in the field artillery before being transferred to the newly formed Office of Strategic Services. There he took over Mr. Saarinen's job as chief of design.

That led to his designing the courtroom for the Nuremberg trials. While in Europe, he visited Versailles, with its stunning garden by André Le Nôtre. Far from being bored by

Le Nôtre's traditionalist approach, Mr. Kiley was deeply impressed with the master's ability to "control a landscape," Mr. Walker said.

After the war, Mr. Kiley wanted to enjoy the peace of the countryside and moved first to New Hampshire and then to Burlington, Vt., before settling in Charlotte. He said the rural setting inspired his work.

"You do your best work when you're joyful," he said in an interview with The Burlington Free Press in 1997.

In 1947, Mr. Saarinen asked Mr. Kiley to work with him on the architectural competition for the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial on the banks of the Mississippi River in St. Louis. Mr. Kiley designed a wooded park to link the arch to the city, the river and the American West. But he was taken off the job, over Mr. Saarinen's vigorous protests.

Several other designs of his were later changed or never quite came off in the first place, a common hazard for landscape architects. At Lincoln Center, for example, Mr. Kiley's instructions for tree care were ignored, and when his original grove of sycamores died, his plans were forgotten. Pear trees, one to a planter, were installed in their place.

It "devastated the design," Mr. Kiley said in an interview with The Times in 1995. "With one little tree in there, it just looks kind of silly."

Mr. Kiley and the former Anne Lothrop Sturges, his wife of 61 years, raised eight children on a 400-acre farm by the shores of Lake Champlain. They built rafts and cut down pine trees for a teepee village and became known for both fine dinner parties and swimming in the nude.

"Everybody in the village thought we were a nudist colony," Mr. Kiley told The Times in 2000.

In addition to his wife, Mr. Kiley is survived by his sons Kor, of South Burlington, Vt., Christopher, of Newtonville, Mass., Timothy, of Newton Highlands, Mass., Caleb, of Charlotte, and Aaron, of Ann Arbor, Mich.; his daughters Kathleen Dunn of Burlington, Grace Kiley of Williston, Vt., and Antonia Holmes of Suffield, Conn.; 19 grandchildren; and one great-grandson.

Mr. Kiley was known for colorful descriptions of serious matters. At a seminar at Harvard, he responded to scholars minutely analyzing his creative influences by pretending to slalom down an imaginary ski slope.

"Life is design," he said. "It's like skiing down a mountain."