MYTHOLOGY TOUR - The Untermyer Gardens is inspired by international and centuries-old artistic, cultural and religious traditions. There is something magical in seeing this unusual and stunning Indo-Persian architecture with its fortress-walled garden and towers in each corner, guarded and protected by Greek representations of Artemis, Medusa, and by the mysterious and omniscient winged Sphinx. The garden incorporates additional protection symbols of Asian Foo Dogs at the Loggia and the Coat of Arms of the United Kingdom at the Gate House. The walled garden's crisscross axis of canals and paths, one of them flanked by two tall columns alighted each with a sphinx on top and a round open top Greek style temple looking out onto the dramatic view of the Hudson River and the steep cliffs of the Palisades, representing crossovers of different religion and culture and an interpretation of Eden.

Untermyer hired **William Welles Bosworth**, a Landscape Architect who worked on Kykuit & Fontainebleau at Versailles. In addition to his training in classical architecture from the Beaux Arts School in Paris, he had studied Persian, Spanish, Moorish design & was influenced by the 1913 book "Gardens of the Great Mughals" by C.M. Villiers Stuart. Therefore when Bosworth was commissioned by Untermyer to create "World's Greatest Garden", he combined Greek, Roman and Islamic Features. Kykuit has a smaller Moorish garden with low walls. The Untermyer Garden is the largest Indo-Persian garden in North America.

Why a walled garden? The special conditions of the land inspired Bosworth to create an Indo-Persian or Mughal garden with three walls high enough to conceal the original greenhouses as well as the traffic on Broadway. The fourth side is open to the Hudson River view (with the Palisades appearing to be the fourth wall). The gardens three enclosed sides have crenellated walls of creamy beige brick with a diamond pattern and octagonal towers like the Agra Fort in Northern India and Persian & Mughal palaces (called chatri in India). At the heart of the Mughal garden is the charbagh, which features canals dividing the garden into four quadrants, alluding to the Paradise of the Hereafter. The canals represent 4 Rivers of Eden; while the quadrants represent 4 Elements - earth/air/fire/water or milk/water/wine/honey. Paradise gardens are mentioned in the Jewish Scripture, the Christian Bible (*Gen.* 2:8-14) and in the Persian Islamic Qur'an (Qur'an 9:72).

The charbagh originated in Persia and made its way into South Asia by way of the Mughals. Perhaps the most notable Mughal charbagh is in the Taj Mahal compound. The Alhambra in Spain built by the Moors also features the charbagh overlaid with later European features. Indo-Persian gardens were influenced by Egyptian gardens (ziggurat feature) and eventually influenced the Greek and Roman Empire Christian gardens, e.g., Old St. Peter's Basilica garden in Rome, Medici gardens in Florence and Castello & Boboli villa gardens.

Why classical Greek and Roman features? In an emerging American Republic, the stately building style, borrowed from the ancients, became a perfect mode of expression. The Greek Revival style of architecture became the dominant architectural style in the 1800s and still echoes in our culture today. Greek elements included three styles of columns (Doric, Ionic, Corinthian), temples, stoas, loggias, amphitheatres, bas reliefs, and statues. All of these elements are present in the Untermyer Gardens.

Why Greek mythology? Greek mythology is the collection of poems and songs originally told by the ancient Greeks over 2000 years ago. These myths revolved around twelve gods who lived in Mount Olympus and gave meaning to the world that people saw around them. Greek mythology continues to be reflected in western society. In The Power of Myth, Joseph Campbell defined the Hero Cycle, a course of events that occurs as a rite of initiation in every myth, pinpointing the need for mentors, villains, elixirs and jesters along the way. Basically, myths are stories that tell us about battles between good and evil.

The most contemporary examples of mythology are in modern-day comic books, movies produced by Marvel & DC Comics, and fiction books. Contemporary fantasy fiction is especially rich in mythology, e.g., Rick Riordan's Percy Jackson character, J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter, Luke Skywalker in Star Wars, Alice in the Adventures in Wonderland, C.S. Lewis's Chronicles of Narnia, and Tolkien's Lord of the Rings.

Walled Garden Entrance – Large Mycenaean Gate (like for a citadel or gate of paradise) is guarded by a stone carved by the sculptor Ulric Ellerhusen with the image of **Artemis, the Greek goddess of the hunt**. In Greek religion, the goddess of nature and the hunt. Artemis was the daughter of Zeus and Leto and the twin sister of Apollo. Artemis stands guard to protect the paradise garden within the walls.

Ancient Mycenaean triangle on reverse of entrance. According to Greek mythology, Perseus, son of Zeus, founded Mycenae (Ancient Greece). He instructed the Cyclops (one-eyed giants) to build the walls of Mycenae with stones no human could lift. A relieving triangle (a triangular block of stone that fit into the recess of the corbeled arch) helped to redistribute weight from the lintel to the supporting walls

Entering the garden. Persian and Islamic cultures imagined serene and rich gardens of paradise that provided an oasis in the midst of the deserts of the Middle East. The garden was a representation of heaven on earth: paradise. Walled gardens were meant for physical and spiritual replenishment, providing shelter from the hot sun, cooling water and luxurious plantings. Notice how you feel as you enter. This garden was designed to appeal to all the senses. Under the weeping beech trees, you are soothed by a cool breeze as the temperature drops by 10 degrees. You hear the sound of water and of birds and perhaps music, smell fragrant flowers, and see beautiful plantings, art and architecture.

According to Judeo-Christian and Islamic tradition, humans were granted the gift of free will in choosing good over evil. One's choice would then dictate the quality of one's life and, naturally, one's afterlife. Hence, one walks past the **Tree of Life & the Tree of Knowledge of Good/Evil** which will determine if you can remain in Paradise (in life & in death).

When one enters the Walled Garden, it is like entering the ancient world of Greek and Islamic mythology. One can walk between the two majestic trees at the entrance and marvel at the mythological pools, resplendent with water lilies, papyrus and other elements from Greek and Islamic mythology. The eye goes straight to the columns, which march to the beat of ancient architectural history – Doric to Ionic to Corinthian.

Doric Stoa - while Persian in style, it is appointed with Greek architecture and a small pergola. In Untermyer's time, it is said that there was an apple tree planted there. In Greek mythology, the goddess Hera kept a grove of apple trees that bore golden apples in the Garden of the Hesperides. The golden apples were believed to give immortality to anyone who consumed them.

Ionic Amphitheater - more ornate columns and ionic scroll capitals (papyrus) built for Christian wife Minnie (Carl) Untermyer and her passion for the Arts. The mosaic floor of the amphitheater was based on a wall fresco found in the ancient Mycenean city of Tiryns. The fresco, though to date from 1400-1200 BC, depicts spirals and papyrus lotus blossoms.

Paul Manship Sphinxes sit atop Ionic Columns made of Cipollino Marble. These wondrous winged creatures from Mycenaean mythology, sculpted by Paul Manship, watch over the amphitheater. **In Egypt, the sphinx was viewed as a protector and a benevolent guardian**. The combination of the lion's body and the human head is interpreted as symbolic of strength and intelligence. **In Greece, the sphinx was symbolic of mystery, wisdom and omniscience.** The Sphinx of Greek culture is usually depicted as a winged creature with a woman's head on a lion's body.

In Greek mythology, Oedipus encountered the Sphinx at the crossroads on his journey between Thebes and Delphi. Oedipus must answer the Sphinx's riddle correctly in order to pass. Failure means his own death and that of the besieged Thebans. Oedipus avoided being eaten by the creature by answering the riddle correctly. **Sphinx's riddle: What goes on four feet in the morning, two feet at noon, and three feet in the evening?** (Answer: a person: A person as a baby in the morning of their life crawls on four feet (hands and knees). As an adult in the noon of their life, they walk on two feet. Oedipus was the first to answer the riddle correctly and, having heard Oedipus' answer, the Sphinx was astounded and inexplicably killed herself by throwing herself into the sea. Oedipus thereby won the freedom of the Thebans, the kingdom of that city, and as his wife, Jocasta (who was later revealed to be his mother).

Manship's Actaeon and Diana sculptures used to be in the garden are now at Hudson River Museum - The hunter Actaeon surprised the goddess Diana while she was bathing. To prevent him from telling anybody that he had seen her naked, the goddess fired an arrow and turned him into a stag. In the sculpture, Actaeon appears to have been just hit, while the accompanying piece shows Diana with her bow raised. In this way, Manship created a link between the two sculptures through the flight of an unseen arrow. Many other Greek sculptures from Untermyer Gardens were sold/lost. Among the many items that were at Greystone then but sold/lost were: a marble *Venus Italica* (the Greek god Aphrodite) after an 1812 model by Antonio Canova, a group of Four Seasons, a figural fountain by Isidore Konti titled *The Brook*, and several rare Greek and Roman marbles, including a sculpture of Aphrodite and a torso of a youth after the model by Praxiteles and a lesser bronze of Neptune. The Greek and Roman works were highlighted in the *New York Times* coverage of the Untermyer Sale, a spectacular event administered by the Parke-Bernet auction gallery and held over several days from May 10th to May 18th, 1940.

Corinthian Temple - Temple of the Sky with view of Hudson River - The Temple of the Sky is a magnificent roofless Greek circular rotunda crowned by Corinthian columns and centered by an extensive **mosaic of Medusa**. Medusa is a monster from Greek mythology generally described as a winged female with snakes for hair. Her face was so hideous and her gaze so piercing that the mere sight of her was sufficient to turn a man to stone. Once a beautiful maiden, Medusa incurred the wrath of Athena, either due to her boastfulness or because of an ill-fated love affair with Poseidon. Transformed into a vicious monster with snakes for hair, she was killed by Perseus, who afterward used her still potent head as a weapon, before gifting it to Athena, the goddess of war.

In antiquity, the image of Medusa was used for protection, to deflect evil (like the modern evil eye). She represents a dangerous threat meant to deter other dangerous threats. In addition, the gardens' designer Bosworth chose the image of Medusa for the mosaic because in Greek mythology she is the offspring of two water gods and the Temple of the Sky sits between the Hudson River and the canals in the Persian-style garden that represent four ancient rivers.

Below the Temple of the Sky sits a **Ziggurat-shaped Persian Pool** lined with Greek mosaics of the rippling waves and sea creatures of Poseidon. A Ziggurat is a rectangular tiered temple erected by the Ancient Persians & used as a shrine.

Foo Dogs (Fu Dogs) are Chinese protection symbols of feng shui that typically "guard" the entranceways to buildings and homes. Ironically, they don't actually depict dogs, but rather lions. They are always presented in pairs and are traditionally carved from granite, marble or some other decorative stone. Due to the high cost of the materials

and craftsmanship required to sculpt them, these statues were usually reserved for only the wealthiest and most prestigious families, or imperial palaces, tombs and governmental offices. Consequently, they represented not only sacred protectors against negative energy, but aristocratic status as well.

How did the Foo Lion-Dogs mythology develop? Their mythology has origins that can be traced back to Buddhism in the Chinese Han Dynasty during the second century B.C. According to Buddhist legend, preaching the truth of the Dharma is akin to "roaring like a lion," which will eventually silence all other voices. The Chinese refer to them as "shi" meaning lion or shishi or stone lion. Over the centuries, the popularity of these symbolic lions spread across Asia. Japan adopted them from Korea, referring to them as "Korean Dogs." The Japanese then introduced them to Western cultures, who altered the name to "foo dogs" or "fu dogs." Although, the words translate to "Buddha" and "prosperity," the Chinese rarely use these prefixes in conjunction with guardian symbols and never refer to them as "dogs." However the name "fu dogs" stuck since the statues often more closely resemble Chinese breeds of dogs (e.g. Chow Chow and Shih Tzu) than predatory lions.

Vista Steps are built to model the Villa D'Este Resort on Lake Como in Italy. The vista has two Ancient Roman Columns made of Cipollino Marble imported by the architect Stanford White. These are the tallest monolithic ancient Roman Columns in North America.

The Ruined Garden in The Gate House with the Lion and the Unicorn - The Lion and the Unicorn are symbols on the royal coat of arms of **the United Kingdom**. The lion stands for England and the unicorn for Scotland. Lions are symbols of **courage, power & royalty.** Unicorns are symbols of **magic, mystery, virtue, romance, and positivity**.

The **Temple of Love** serves as an anchor for the rock and stream gardens. Legend has it that it was built for the wedding of Untermyer's daughter. The Temple of Love overlooks a magnificent view south along the Hudson River and the Palisades. Best viewed from below, it is a stupendous rocky fantasy capped with a round temple. It was the centerpiece of an extended rock garden and was flanked by terraced beds. The outcropping was an elaborate water feature, with water coursing all around it in various waterfalls and ponds. The Temple of Love was created by Carlo Davite, a Genoese stone mason who did work in the Paris Exposition, the St. Louis Exposition and at the Frick Museum. Many of the rocks are hollowed out to form planters, and in Samuel Untermyer's time, the entire creation was elaborately planted. There are three bridges in the rough stone and a small seating area with a rough hewn stone bench that can be reached through a rocky tunnel in the folly. An additional monolithic bridge crosses the pool at the base of the Temple of Love.

In Greek Mythology and in Scripture, **agape love is the highest form of love** and is contrasted with eros, or erotic love, and philia, or brotherly love. The reciprocal love between God and humans is made manifest in one's unselfish love of others. Greek Mythology further defines Agape as love that is universalistic, inclusive, and built on generosity. Agape is thus a challenge to a world built on the principles of economic rationality. In this sense, it helps enlighten a new way of interpreting leadership, based on compassion and even self-sacrifice.

While a first paradise was lost and remembered or dreamed only in literature or gardens, carpets, tiles and other ways in the Near East, a second paradise may be possible in the future. It is partially previewed in a biblical prophetic book. In *Ezekiel* 47:12 the exilic prophet envisions a better future in his challenged present of Babylonian captivity. He rhapsodizes the new trees planted by God and watered by a river flowing directly from the new temple in the New Jerusalem: **"all the trees have fruit for food and leaves for the healing of the nations."**

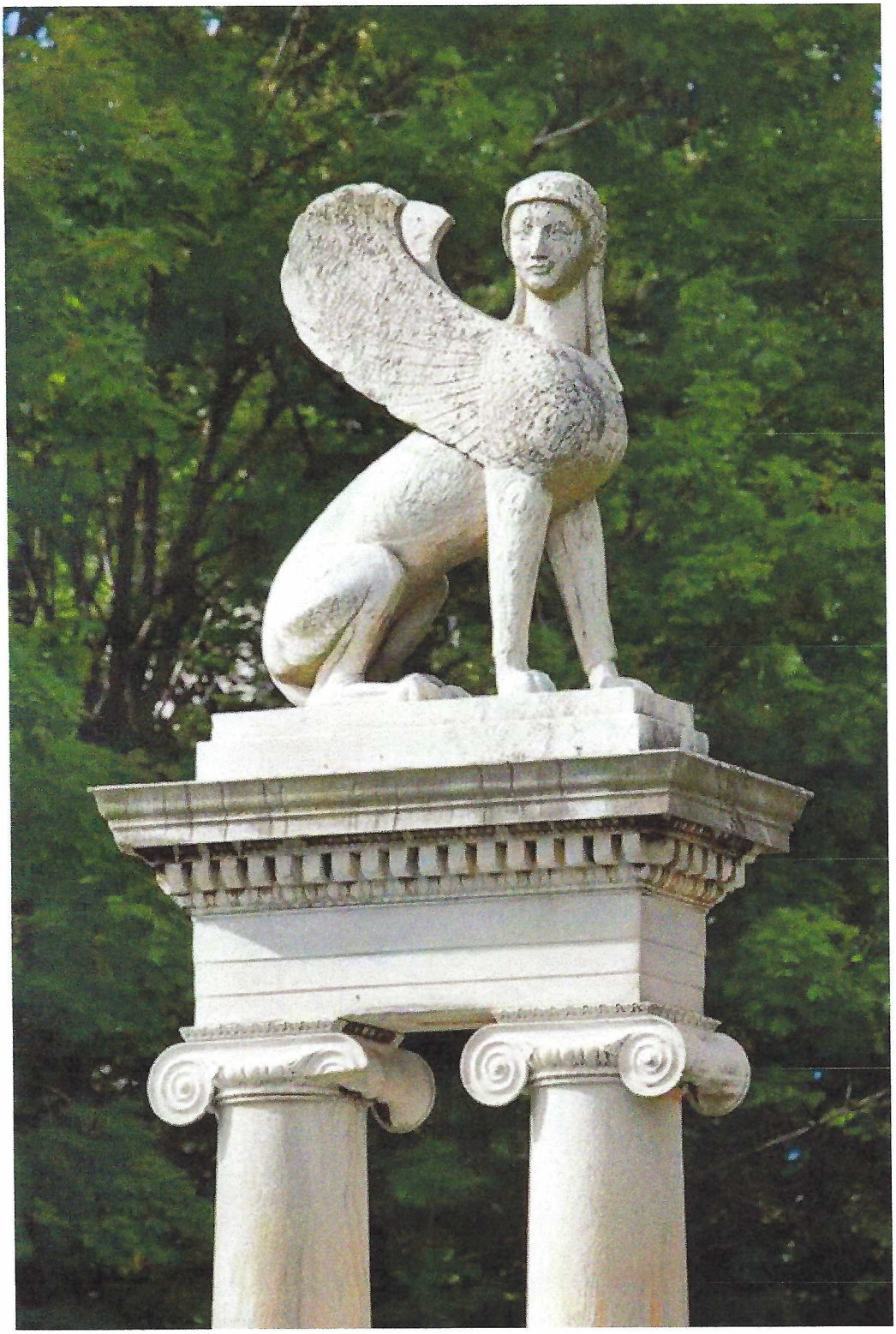
We all know that gardens mean hope. Creating a place where natural beauty can be sown and nurtured and enjoyed is an ambitious, humanitarian act. Therefore, a restored historic garden represents hope renewed. Samuel and Minnie Untermyer championed inclusivity for all people and traditions. They believed in bringing diverse cultural opportunities to the public. How lucky we are that these gardens survive in Yonkers, and in the fullness of time can possibly stand as a symbol of harmony and healing for the world.

John Lennon at the Temple of Love on March 28, 1975

He wrote the song **"Imagine"** in the early 1970's:

"Imagine all the people, livin' life in peace. You may say I'm a dreamer, but I'm not the only one. I hope someday you'll join us. And the world will be as one."

The great gate leading into the garden features a relief of the Artemis, the Goddess of Nature and the Hunt. On the reverse side is a Mycenean Triangle. The gate was based on the Lion Gate of Mycenaea (13th Century BCE) which featured an enormous lintel, corbelled masonry arches and a relieving triangular space, filled, in the case of the ancient gate, with a relief sculpture of two lions. The Bosworth version lacks the lions but retains the feel of ancient history.



The mysterious and omniscient Sphinx guards the Untermyer Walled Garden. Can you answer the riddle to proceed past the loggia?

Medusa is a monster from Greek mythology generally described as a winged female with snakes for hair. In antiquity, the image of Medusa was used for protection, to deflect evil (like the modern evil eye). She represents a dangerous threat meant to deter other dangerous threats.

Two fierce Foo Lions stand on guard... you must pass them, however, if you want to see the Vista!

Manship's Actaeon and Diana sculptures now at Hudson River Museum - The hunter Actaeon surprised the goddess Diana (Artemis) while she was bathing. To prevent him from telling anybody that he had seen her naked, the goddess fired an arrow and turned him into a stag. In the sculpture, Actaeon appears to have been just hit, while the accompanying piece shows Diana with her bow raised. In this way, Manship created a link between the two sculptures through the flight of an unseen arrow.

The Gate House features the coat of arms of Great Britain: the lion symbolizes England and the unicorn, Scotland.

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